DISCOURSES

CONCERNING THE

TRUTH

OF THE

Chriſtian Religion.

MUSEUM
BRITANNICUM

by John Jortin

LONDON:

Printed for JOHN WHISTON, in *Fleet-Street*,

MDCC XLVI.

MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM

PREFACE.

THERE *is a ſyſtem relating to religion and to the ſtate of things which is certainly true, whether we believe it or no. It greatly concerns us to have right notions about it, and to provide, as far as we can, for our future well-being, if this life ſhould be the paſſage to another.*

To ſhew that there is ſufficient evidence of the truth of Chriſtianity, to illuſtrate ſome parts of it, and to defend it againſt ſome objections, is the deſign

deſign of the following Diſcourſes, to which before I diſmiſs the Reader, I beg leave to detain him a few minutes, whilſt I make an apology for this undertaking againſt an obvious objection.

Many are the books already extant upon the ſubject; Fabricius *has reckon'd up ſome hundreds, and doubtleſs ſeveral treatiſes might be added which have eſcaped even his diligence. What occaſion is there for any more, in a country which has produced ſo many excellent writers in the cauſe, and where learned perſons are continually appointed to diſcourſe* profeſſedly *upon it?*

As to the number of treatiſes, it may be replied, that ſome of them are grown

*grown very ſcarce, and others are fallen into oblivion, for which reaſon an Author may be permitted to ſtep in and take a place made vacant by one who is now * gone to reſt. And though it be preſumption to think of equalling the great men who have laboured before us, and whoſe reputation is eſtabliſh'd, yet ſince there are many who had rather peruſe a † new book than a good book, their humour ſhould not be totally diſregarded.*

The ſame truths may be placed in various views; and amongſt men whoſe taſte and fancy differ ſo widely, an argument ſhall ſeem perſuaſive, and a remark pertinent to one,

* Nunc placida compoſtus pace quieſcit.

† Τὴν γὰρ ἀοιδὴν μᾶλλον ἐπικλείουσ' ἄνθρωποι,
Ἥτις ἀκουόντεσσι νεωτάτη ἀμφιπέληται.

Homer. Odyſſ. A. 351.

which by another is ſlighted and rejected. It ſeems therefore convenient that ſeveral perſons ſhould try their skill, and propoſe their thoughts upon a matter of ſuch importance, ſince every one may reaſonably hope to gain over, or confirm, or ſecure ſome reader of a correſponding turn of mind. Even the weakeſt contriver of a fooliſh and forlorn ſyſtem muſt be very unlucky, if he finds not a few approvers and followers: he poſſeſſes at leaſt a quality ſomewhat like electricity, which attracts chaff and ſtraws; and what the old Greek *Poet obſerved in his days is as true now;*

Ὡ̓ς ἀιεὶ τὸν ὁμοῖον ἄγει θεὸς ὡς τὸν ὁμοῖον

——— Some overruling Pow'r
Ever delights to couple like to like.

The underſtandings of men are as the chords of muſical inſtruments; when

when a ſtring ſounds, the ſtrings which are uniſons to it, if within proper diſtance, will vibrate.

None then ought to be diſcouraged, though his abilities be no more than common, from appearing in defence of truths in which all are intereſted. Invention, Wit, Sagacity, Eloquence; *when they offer their ſervice on this occaſion, merit a kind reception. Behind theſe follows modeſt and ſlow-paced* Induſtry, *willing to take the loweſt place, and yet ſometimes more uſeful than ſome of the former, and verifying the proverb,* Claudus viator omnia refert certiora, A lame traveller brings the beſt intelligence.

If, amidſt ſome imperfections, an argument, which is not new, be ſet in a new light, if an objection be re-

moved, if a ſentiment be ſo expreſſed as to leave a good effect upon the mind, if an ingenious, or uſeful, or remarkable paſſage, not commonly known, be produced from an ancient Writer, if ſomewhat be ſuggeſted worthy of conſideration, and the Reader be put upon thinking, and the Author perform the humble office of an Index *which points out the roads to the paſſenger, the work ought not to be treated with contempt.*

Shall I add yet farther, that ſuch perſons deſerve ſomething beyond a bare permiſſion to utter their thoughts? When the intention ſeems upright, and the end propoſed is to make men better and wiſer, what is not ill executed ſhould be received with approbation, with good words and

good

good wiſhes, and ſmall faults and inadvertencies ſhould be candidly excuſed. Much more than this it may be vanity or folly to expect.

And here I thought to have concluded; but theſe words of Grotius *come ſo often into my mind, that I cannot forbear to quote them.* Lapſum Origenem in quibuſdam rebus negari non poteſt. Quale mihi nequid eveniat, Deum ſupplex precor, ſoleoque ſcriptis meis hanc addere cautionem, ut ſi quid ibi ſit alienum dogma [*a veritate et ſacris Literis*] id pro non ſcripto habeatur.

In this I would willingly joyn with Grotius. *Whoſoever is in the diſpoſition which he deſcribes, takes the beſt way to ſecure himſelf from dangerous*

dangerous errors; and if he has any wrong notions, there is reaſon to hope that they proceed not from a bad mind, but are only the Iſſues of unfortunate Inquiry.

JOHN JORTIN.

CONTENTS.

THE *prejudices of the* Jews *and* Gentiles. Page 1.

II.

The propagation of the Goſpel. P. 82.

III.

The kingdom of Chriſt. P. 111.

IV.

The fitneſs of the time when Chriſt came into the world. P. 149.

V.

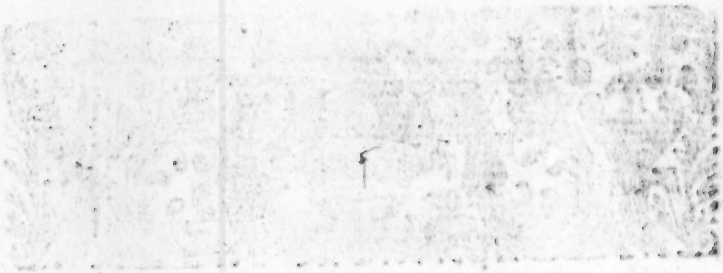
The teſtimony of John *the Baptiſt.* P. 166.

VI.

The Scriptures of the New Teſtament. P. 191.

VII.

The Goſpel, as it is grace and truth. P. 221.



Of the Prejudices of the JEWS *and* GENTILES.

WHEN we read over the hiſtory of *Chriſt*, and conſider the variety of beneficial miracles which he wrought, and his mild and inoffenſive behaviour, it muſt at firſt ſight ſeem very ſtrange that the *Jews* ſhould reject him and put him to death; that they, who had ſo long expected and ſo greatly deſired the coming of the *Meſſias*, ſhould perſecute and kill him when he appeared amongſt them, and ſo well confirmed his right to the character which he aſſumed.

When we conſider farther how the Apoſtles afterwards confirmed the truth of his reſurrection, how many miracles they wrought, teaching the ſame holy doctrines as their Maſter had taught, and imitating his good example, and how innocent and virtuous the behaviour of the firſt Chriſtians was, it ſeems alſo ſtrange that the *Jewiſh* nation ſhould not have yielded to ſuch Evidence.

And though the Apoſtles had great Succeſs in the heathen world, and brought over multitudes to the faith, yet it appears unaccountable that more of the *Gentiles* were not moved to receive the Goſpel by the miracles which they wrought in its behalf, and that few of the rich, of the great, and of the learned were at firſt converted.

We are inclined to think that if we had lived in thoſe days, and ſeen what the *Jews* and *Gentiles* then ſaw, we ſhould readily have embraced the Goſpel, and that if any perſon in our ſight ſhould heal all diſtempers, and remove all infirmities, and raiſe the dead, we ſhould ſubmit to any thing that he commanded, and receive any thing that he taught, unleſs it were plainly abſurd and contrary to common ſenſe. They who reject* the Goſpel, object to the miracles recorded in it, that the bulk of the Jewiſh nation was not converted by them, and that in the Pagan world the poorer and meaner ſort of the people were chiefly the firſt proſelytes to the Chriſtian religion, and the learned and powerful for the moſt

* See Limborch *Collat. cum Judæo*, p. 63. where the *Jew* uſes this kind of argument.

part

part ſtood out; till at length the Roman Emperors became Chriſtians, and what by force, what by example, brought their opinion into faſhion, and eſtabliſhed it in the world.

But whoſoever ſhall well conſider the many cauſes concurring to keep the *Jews* and *Gentiles* from embracing the Goſpel, will ceaſe to judge it ſtrange that ſo many of them perſevered in their unbelief.

One great and general cauſe to which the infidelity of the *Jews* ſhould be aſcribed, is their wickedneſs; and that certainly is a cauſe ſufficient to produce ſuch an effect. If a man is vitious, he is diſpoſed to reject evident truths, and to embrace ridiculous opinions. That vice weakens the underſtanding, infatuates the judgment, and hinders it from diſcerning between truth and falſehood, eſpecially in matters of morality and religion, is affirmed conſtantly in Scripture, is highly agreeable to reaſon, and perpetually teſtified by experience. That the *Jews* were then very wicked is plain from ſeveral paſſages of the New Teſtament,

and * *Joſephus* informs us of enormous villanies practiſed by many of them, of which no Pagan nation was perhaps ever guilty.

Suppoſe a man ſenſual and debauched, proud and conceited, uncharitable and malicious, unjuſt and worldly-minded, ſuppoſe him not to have been educated in groſs ignorance of his duty, but to have had ſufficient opportunities of acquiring ſome degrees of ſacred knowledge, and by

* *Vid.* B. J. iv. v. vi. *paſſim.*

Καθέκαστον μὲν ἔν ἐπεξιέναι τὴν παρανομίαν αὐτῶν, ἀδύνατον. συνελόντα δ' εἰπεῖν, μήτε πόλιν ἄλλην τοιαῦτα πεπονθέναι, μήτε γενεὰν ἐξ αἰῶνος γεγονέναι κακίας γονιμωτέραν. v. x. 5.

Οἶμαι Ῥωμαίων ϛρατυόντων ἐπὶ τὰς ἀλιτηρίους, ἢ καταποθῆναι ἂν ὑπὸ χάσματος, ἢ καλακλυσθῆναι τὴν πόλιν, ἢ τὰς τῆς Σοδομηνῆς μεταλαβεῖν κεραυνούς. πολὺ γὰρ τῶν ταῦτα παθόντων ἔνεγκε γενεὰν ἀθεωτέραν. v. xiii. 6. Ed. Haverc.

To give a particular account of all their iniquities, would be endleſs; thus much, in general, it may ſuffice to ſay, that there never was a city which ſuffered ſuch miſeries, nor a race of men from the beginning of the world who ſo abounded in wickedneſs.

I verily believe that if the Romans *had delayed to deſtroy theſe wicked wretches, the city would either have been ſwallowed up by the earth, or overwhelmed by the waters, or ſtruck with fire from heaven as another* Sodom; *for it produced a far more impious generation than thoſe who ſuffered ſuch puniſhment.*

his

his evil diſpoſition to have been led either to diſbelieve plain truths, or to continue in ſin againſt the dictates of his own conſcience, or to find out ſome ways of reconciling his religion with his vices; ſuppoſe ſuch a one has the Goſpel preach'd to him by an Apoſtle, and confirmed by ſigns and wonders, there is no reaſon to conclude that he will receive it, that he will ſubmit to a religion which is attended with many temporal inconveniences, and which upon all accounts he deſpiſes and hates, that he will alter his whole courſe of life, and become a poor and perſecuted diſciple of Chriſt, and enter into his Church.

I know, it may be ſaid that amongſt the firſt Chriſtians there were* ſeveral who had led bad lives before; but there are many degrees

* Ἡμεῖς δὲ, ſays *Origen*, εἴτις κατανοῆσαι ἡμῶν εὐγνωμόνως τὸ ἄθροισμα, πλείονας ἔχομεν παραστῆσαι τοὺς οὐκ ἀπὸ χαλεποῦ πάνυ βίου ἤπερ τοὺς ἀπὸ ἐξωλεστάτων ἁμαρτημάτων ἐπιστρέψαντας. καὶ γὰρ πεφύκασιν οἱ τὰ κρείττονα ἑαυτοῖς συνεγνωκότες, εὐχόμενοι ἀληθῆ εἶναι τὰ κηρυσσόμενα περὶ τῆς ὑπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῖς κρείττοσιν ἀμοιβῆς, ἑτοιμότερον συγκατατίθεσθαι τοῖς λεγομένοις, παρὰ τοὺς πάνυ μοχθηρῶς βεβιωκότας.——*If any one will candidly conſider us Chriſtians, we can produce him more who have been converted from a life not the worſt, than from a very wicked courſe.*

degrees in wickedneſs, and there is no reaſon to ſuppoſe that theſe ſinners were for the moſt part of the worſt ſort; and though ſome perſons who have been very wicked may become very good, and ſuch were found amongſt the firſt Chriſtians, yet where the exceptions are few, the general obſervation is not affected by them; for thus much is certain, that an honeſt mind is a great help to underſtand the truth, that the practice of Morality leads to the practice of Chriſtianity, and that, ſince converſion is brought about by ſteps, and revealed religion is founded on natural religion, he who is moved to embrace the Goſpel muſt be firſt ſenſible of the difference between good and evil, truth and falſehood, virtue and vice, muſt love the one and abhor the other, muſt repent of his former tranſgreſſions and receive the ſacred knowledge, which is offered to him, with gratitude and a firm reſolution of performing his duty. He therefore who can call evil good, and

For they, whoſe conſcience ſpeaks favourably in their behalf, are diſpoſed to wiſh that our doctrine concerning the future rewards of goodneſs may be true; and ſo are more ready to aſſent to the Goſpel than profligate men. Contr. Celſ. iii. p. 150.

good

good evil, who is totally corrupted in heart and underſtanding, is removed at an infinite diſtance from God and righteouſneſs, has no ears to hear, and no eyes to ſee, not even to ſee miracles, ſo as to be inſtructed and amended by them.

To this general cauſe the unbelief of the *Jews* may be aſcribed, as alſo to ſeveral prejudices which they had againſt the perſon of Chriſt, and the doctrines of the Goſpel.

The *Jews* were offended at Chriſt, becauſe he was not received and followed by thoſe of the moſt learning and authority amongſt them. *Have any of the rulers, or of the Phariſees believed on him?*

We may then ſuppoſe that a *Jew* who rejected the Goſpel would have argued thus: It becomes a private man not to lean too much to his own underſtanding, but to ſuppoſe that they who have ſtudied the laws of God more than himſelf, and are appointed of God to be his inſtructors, are better judges in religious controverſies than he can poſſibly be. Our ſpiritual guides are all of opinion that Jeſus is not the Meſſias. It is therefore the moſt modeſt, rational, and ſafe way for me, who have not their

leiſure, learning and abilities, to ſubmit and truſt to their deciſions.

Here is a prejudice founded upon the doctrine that private perſons, eſpecially they who are ignorant and illiterate, ſhould follow the judgment of the Church, of their guides and teachers. This doctrine has ſomething plauſible in it, and under certain limitations and reſtrictions may be admitted.

The vulgar ought indeed to pay a great regard to their teachers, and are often under a neceſſity of admitting many things upon their authority; but then we muſt except things plain * in their own nature, in a a word, every thing in which the reaſon of one man is as good a judge as the reaſon of another, in which a man knows that he wants no guide, and therefore ſhould ſubmit to none.

This is the caſe before us. Every *Jew* in *Jeruſalem* was as competent a judge of a miracle as the high prieſt, and if he ſaw Chriſt raiſe a man from the dead, and perform a variety of wonderful works, might

* *See* Whitby *Serm. on* Joh. viii. 37. *in his* Comment. vol. 1.

conclude

conclude with full aſſurance, and without any danger of miſtaking, that God would never ſuffer a deceiver to do ſuch works in his name, who taught nothing contrary to common ſenſe.

In ſuch a caſe as this, a *Jew* who ſubmitted to the authority of the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*, of the chief prieſts and rulers, againſt plain evidence, abſolutely renounced all uſe of reaſon, after which it would have been ridiculous in him to talk of the reaſonableneſs of following his guides, the reaſonableneſs of rejecting private judgment; for what had ſuch a one to do with reaſon?

The *Jews* were offended at Chriſt, becauſe he was not a temporal prince and a conqueror. They were all perſuaded that the Meſſias ſhould be a great king, under whom they ſhould rule over the *Gentiles*, and live in wealth and pleaſure.

When therefore they found that Chriſt was poor and deſpiſed, and died an ignominious death, and that his kingdom, as his Apoſtles taught, was a ſpiritual kingdom eſtabliſhed in the hearts of men, a kingdom not of this world, the croſs of

Chriſt

Chriſt proved a ſtumbling-block to them, and they were diſpleaſed with a doctrine that ſuited neither with their prejudices nor with their inclinations.

They had indeed ſeveral arguments to offer in behalf of this prejudice, which, though they are weak if they be compared with the ſuperior evidences of the truth of the Goſpel, yet have a plauſible appearance when they are conſidered by themſelves, and therefore deſerve to be anſwered.

1. In the firſt place, as their Law contained ſeveral promiſes to the obedient, and thoſe promiſes were temporal, it was not to be thought ſtrange that the *Jews* ſhould have accounted proſperity a mark of God's favour, and adverſity of his diſpleaſure. This laid a foundation for a prejudice againſt Chriſt and his Apoſtles.

2. Almoſt all the great and good men recorded in the Scriptures, whom God had raiſed up from time to time to be their princes and leaders, were miraculouſly bleſſed with ſucceſs in their undertakings. The *Jews* therefore expected that the *Meſſias*, when he appeared, ſhould ſurpaſs *Moſes* and *Joſhua*, and *David*, and the *Maccabees*,

Maccabees, and other of their victorious kings and leaders, they expected that he ſhould as much ſurpaſs them in ſplendor and felicity, as in dignity and authority.

3. To confirm them in this expectation, there were ſeveral propheſies applied by all the *Jews* to the *Meſſias*, which repreſent him as a powerful prince, who ſhould ſave and protect his people and overcome his enemies, and which ſpeak in magnificent terms of the peace and proſperity of his happy reign.

But it is eaſy to ſhew that theſe objections againſt our Saviour were not ſufficient to excuſe their unbelief.

For, though the Law promiſed temporal bleſſings to the good, yet the *Jews* knew by long experience that thoſe promiſes had not been fulfilled at all times, and to all perſons. Extraordinary interpoſitions in behalf of the righteous were grown leſs frequent, and proportionably to this decreaſe the intimations of a future ſtate had been more numerous and evident. The *Jews* therefore had no reaſon to judge of the characters and merits of men by their ſtation and circumſtances in this life, or to imagine

imagine that *fortunate* and *virtuous* were the ſame thing.

They might have found examples of good men who had undergone much trouble, and had received here below no reward of their obedience.

They might have learned from the Prophets that the *Meſſias*, to whom ſo much power and proſperity and ſplendor was promiſed, was alſo to be a man* of ſorrows, and acquainted with grief, and that his ſoul was to be an offering for ſin; and they might have ſeen, in the ſufferings of Chriſt, and in his reſurrection, the accompliſhment of theſe ſeemingly irreconcileable predictions.

Laſtly; if ſome particular propheſies concerning the reign of the Meſſias appeared to them unfulfilled, they ought not upon that account to have rejected Chriſt: They ſhould have reſted ſatisfied with the various proofs which he gave them of his divine power, and have concluded, either that they did not underſtand the true ſenſe of

* Some of them ſeem to have known and believed it. See *Whitby* on *Epheſ.* i. 4.

thoſe propheſies, or that the time of their completion was not yet come.

They were offended at him, becauſe, as they ſaid, he profaned the ſabbath-day, that is, did not obſerve it according to their ſuperſtitious manner.

But Chriſt, as the great Prophet, and a worker of miracles, according to the example of other prophets, and according to the deciſions of the *Jews* themſelves, had a power of ſetting aſide the ceremonial reſt of the Sabbath, or any other ritual law. Thus *Joſhua* commanded that the ark of God ſhould be carried round *Jericho*, the armed men going before and after it, ſeven days together, one of which muſt have been a Sabbath; thus *Elijah* and *Eliſha* touched and handled dead bodies, to reſtore them to life, and did not account themſelves legally unclean; thus *Samuel* and *Elijah* offered ſacrifices, though neither of them were prieſts, and in places where, as ſome think, ſacrifices could not be offered according to the law. In a word, it * appears

* See *Le Clerc* on 1 *Sam.* vii. 17. *Grotius* on *Luke* vii. 14. It is certain that the Sabbatic years and the Jubilees were greatly neglected by the *Jews*, as probably were many other

pears that many ceremonial laws were at certain times generally diſuſed, and unobſerved by very good men.

They were offended, ſome of them at leaſt, becauſe he did not live in a way more auſtere, and in their opinion more becoming the dignity which he aſſumed, becauſe he condeſcended to converſe with people of bad reputation, with Publicans and ſinners.

Some were offended at him, becauſe, ſaid they,* we know whence he is, but when Chriſt cometh, no man knoweth whence he is.

Some were offended, becauſe he was not of *Bethlehem*, where it was foretold that the Meſſias ſhould be born. A little enquiry would have ſet them right, if they had taken any pains to find out the truth.

They were offended at him, becauſe he had dwelt in *Galilee*, out of which place

other ceremonial laws. Yet we learn from *Joſephus* i. p. 657, and 741. *Ed. Haverc.* that in the Days of *Herod* the Great, and ſome time at leaſt, before, the Sabbatic years were obſerved. See *Prideaux* in the *Pref.* to his *Connect.* who has not taken notice of this.

* See the *Comment.* on *Joh.* vii. 27.

no

no prophet could ever ariſe, as they fooliſhly ſuppoſed.

Chriſt had dwelt at *Nazareth* till he entered into his office; his relations dwelt there; the inhabitants of that place were acquainted with his perſon, and remembered his education; they knew that he had no opportunity of acquiring the learning which could qualify him to be a teacher. When they heard the force and the wiſdom with which he ſpake, and were informed of his mighty works, and ſaw ſome of them, they were aſtoniſhed, and yet they could not pay him a due reſpect; they * ſlighted him, becauſe they knew him, and the poverty of his family, and the obſcurity in which he had lived amongſt them, and having long view'd him as their equal, they could not ſubmit to ſhew him the veneration due to a prophet. It is very likely that ſome envy was mixed with their prejudice. *Whence*, ſaid

* So the *Ægyptians* at firſt deſpiſed their king *Amaſis*, on account of his extraction and former condition; Τὰ μὲν δὴ πρῶτα καθώνοῦτο τὸν Ἄμασιν Αἰγύπτιοι, καὶ ἐν ὐδεμίῃ μοίρῃ μεγάλῃ ἦγον, ἄτε δὴ δημότην τοπρὶν ἐόντα, καὶ οἰκίης οὐκ ἐπιφανέος. *Herodot.* ii. 172. p. 155.

they,

they, *hath this man this wiſdom, and theſe mighty works?* Whence could he have his power of working miracles unleſs from God? and whence could he have his wiſdom, unleſs from him alſo? They, of all people, ſhould have been the readieſt to believe in him, becauſe knowing well that he had been deprived of the ordinary means of receiving inſtruction, and of acquiring the knowledge which appeared in all that he ſpake, they had a clear evidence that it muſt have been a ſupernatural gift.

They were offended at him, becauſe in his diſcourſes to them he ſometimes gave them hints that he was a much greater perſon than they imagined, upon which they called him a blaſphemer, who made himſelf God, and equal with God, that is, who aſſumed to himſelf divine honours and more reſpect than was due to a prophet; for the *Jews* * had no notion that their Meſſias ſhould be any thing more than mere man.

The *Jews*, as appears from *Juſtin's Dialogue* with *Trypho*, objected to the Chriſtians, that they worſhipped more Gods than

* See *Whitb.* on *Rom.* ix. 5.

one,

one, and aſcribed divine perfections to Chriſt.

To this * *Juſtin*, and other Chriſtians, anſwered, that frequent mention is made in the Old Teſtament of a perſon, who is † called God, and is God, and yet is diſtinguiſhed from the God and Father of all.

Beſides; ‡ *Philo*, and ſeveral of their own writers taught ſomething ſo like the Chriſtian doctrine concerning the Son and the Spirit of God, that the *Jews*, if they condemned the Goſpel upon that account, condemned themſelves.

We read in the Scriptures that God is no object of our ſenſes, that he has no body or form, that he is the inviſible God, whom no man hath ſeen or can ſee. And in many of the manifeſtations which God made of himſelf, nothing appeared, except a glorious light, a cloud and fire, or elſe only a voice was heard. But in other places it is ſaid that God himſelf appeared. To re-

* See the Index to *Thirlby*'s *Juſtin, Chriſtus.*

† Θεὸς καλεῖται, καὶ Θεός ἐστι καὶ ἔσται. *Juſtin.* p. 261.

‡ See *Grotius de Ver.* R. C. v. 21. *Vitringa* on *Iſai.* vol. ii. p. 458. not. *Le Clerc* on *Joh.* i. *Fabric. de Ver.* R. C. p. 132.

concile which, the ancient Chriſtian writers generally agree, and their conſent ought not to be ſlighted, that the * perſon who appeared at different times to *Adam*, to *Abraham*, to *Moſes*, to the elders of *Iſrael*, to the Patriarchs and Prophets, and to other good men, who would not tell his name to *Jacob* and to *Manoah*, when they aſked him who he was, who is called both God and the Angel of God, that this perſon was the Word of God, the Son of God, who was in the form of God, who was the viſible image of the inviſible God, repreſenting the majeſty of his Father, and acting in his name.

* See *Bull*, Defenſ. Fid. Nic. *Clarke* Repl. to *Nelſ.* p. 161. and Serm. 5. vol. 1. *Whitby* on *Joh.* i. 1 *Cor.* x. 9. *Philipp.* ii. 6. *Coloſſ.* i. 15. *Vitringa* on *Iſai.* lxiii. 9, 10. p. 249. and on *Zech.* i. 11, 12, p. 131. concerning the Angel who intercedes with God for the *Jews*.

Some think that where the Angel of the Lord is mentioned, no other is meant than one of thoſe miniſtring ſpirits, who ſometimes repreſented the perſon of God, acted in his ſtead and ſpake in his name; and then, ſay they, whatever honour and adoration might be ſeemingly paid to him, was really paid to God, to whom it was deſigned, and whom the Angel perſonated. See *Le Clerc* in Indice ad *Pentat.* ANGELUS. And the Commentators on *Heb.* ii. 2, and 5.

The

The Angel who appeared to * *Manoah*, (*Judg.* xiii. 18.) ſaid to him, *Why aſkeſt thou after my name, ſeeing it is ſecret*, or *wonderful?* If we compare this with *Iſaiah* ix. 6. it is there ſaid of the Meſſiah, *his name ſhall be called, Wonderful.* If we compare it with *Revel.* xix. 12. it is there ſaid of Chriſt, *He had a name written which none knew but he himſelf.*

Concerning this Angel † *Iſaiah* thus ſpeaks, celebrating God's loving-kindneſs to the children of *Iſrael* in ancient times: *The Angel of God's preſence ſaved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them, and he bare them and carried them all the days of old.*

Theſe great things are here aſcribed to the Angel of God's preſence, or, of his face; which if we compare with the hiſtory of thoſe tranſactions, as related by *Moſes*, we find that God Almighty manifeſted himſelf to *Moſes* by an Angel. *The Angel of the Lord appeared to him in the buſh, and ſaid, I am the God of Abraham, Iſaac and Jacob;*

* See *Vitringa* on *Iſai.* ix. 5, 6.

† lxiii. 9. Where ſee *Vitringa.*

and afterwards, *I am that I am, I am the Lord Jehovah.* We find that this Angel went before his people in a cloud: and afterwards, repreſenting the perſon of almighty God, and ſpeaking in his name, he ſays, *Behold, I ſend my Angel before thee--- beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not: for he will not pardon your tranſgreſſions; for my name is in him.*

Concerning this Angel *Jacob* thus ſpeaks, when he bleſſes the children of *Joſeph: The God who fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bleſs the lads.* And *Moſes* bleſſing the poſterity of *Joſeph*, prays that they may enjoy the favour *of him*, of the Angel, *who dwelt in the buſh.*

Concerning this Angel *Zechariah* thus ſpeaks, xii. 8. *In that day ſhall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jeruſalem, and he that is feeble among them at that day ſhall be as David; and the Houſe of David ſhall be as God, as the Angel of the Lord before them.* The ſentence riſes in ſuch a manner, that it cannot be ſuppoſed to ſink at laſt; whence it is reaſonable to conclude that the

ſame

ſame perſon is here called God, and the Angel of the Lord.

Laſtly, Concerning the ſame Angel *Malachi* ſays, *The Lord whom ye ſeek ſhall ſuddenly come to his temple, even the Angel*, or meſſenger, *of the covenant*.

This mighty Angel, the ſaviour, redeemer, interceſſor, and protector, ſeems to be no common or created Angel, but that Angel in whom the name of God was, and by whom God ſpeaks to mankind, and who on that account is called the Word of God, who was in the beginning with God, and who was God, by whom all things were created, and who afterwards became man and dwelt with us.

The *Jews* had many prejudices againſt the perſon of Chriſt; they had as many, or rather more, againſt his doctrine.

The religion of the Goſpel is ſpiritual: the religion of the *Jews*, as they made it, was carnal. The Goſpel places morality above rites and ceremonies: the *Jews* preferred, in their practice at leaſt, the ritual law to the moral.

The Goſpel repreſents the law of ceremonies as a temporary inſtitution, which

drew towards its end after the coming of *John* the *Baptiſt*: the *Jews* thought that the whole Law was everlaſting, and of perpetual obigation. They believed that they could perform as much of it as would be ſufficient to ſecure the favour of God; they therefore rejected new doctrines and means of ſalvation as falſe, or uſeleſs and unneceſſary.

Of all their miſtakes and prejudices, their too great zeal for the Law ſeems to have been the moſt excuſable. It aroſe partly from a high veneration for commandments, which were undoubtedly of divine appointment, and a good man might have fallen into it. Therefore the Apoſtles uſed great lenity and condeſcenſion towards the *Jews* in this particular, and ſuffered them to obſerve the ritual law along with the Goſpel, which they did for a conſiderable time, till, *Jeruſalem* being deſtroyed, no ſmall part of the ceremonial law became impracticable, and by ſlow * degrees the whole fell into diſuſe.

* *Sulpitius Severus* L. ii. *Euſebius* E. H. iv. 6. *Origen* contr *Celſ.* ii. p. 56.

The

The *Jews* accounted *Moſes* to have been the greateſt of all the prophets: the Goſpel taught them that *John* the *Baptiſt* was a prophet greater than all who had been before him, yet in every reſpect infinitely inferior to Chriſt, and not equal to the leaſt of Chriſt's diſciples in dignity of office.

The *Jews* not only avoided, as much as they could, all intercourſe with the *Gentiles*, which indeed their own Law required of them in many caſes, but had them generally in abomination, not for their vices, but becauſe they obſerved not the law of *Moſes*: the Goſpel commanded them to love all men, though they were not *Jews* either by birth or by religion, and not to ſhun them as unfit for converſation, unleſs they were ſcandalous by impiety or immorality.

The Goſpel condemned, not only evil actions, but evil inclinations and thoughts: the *Jews*, if we may judge of them by the ſentiments

* *Joſephus* ſays that *Antiochus Epiphanes*, as he was dying, confeſſed that he ſuffered for the injuries which he had done to the *Jews*. Then he adds, I wonder how *Polybius* could ſay that *Antiochus* periſhed, becauſe he had purpoſed

ſentiments of ſome of their own writers, were of opinion that there was no harm in bad deſigns, unleſs they were put in execution.

The

to plunder the temple of *Diana* in *Perſia*; for to intend the thing only, and not to perform it, is not worthy of puniſhment: ὥςε θαυμάζειν Πολύβιον τὸν Μεγαλοπολίτην, ὃς, ἀγαθὸς ὢν ἀνὴρ, ἀποθανεῖν λέγει τὸν Ἀντίοχον, βουληθέντα τὸ τῆς ἐν Πέρσαις Ἀρτέμιδος ἱερὸν συλῆσαι. τὸ γὰρ μηκέτι ποιῆσαι τὸ ἔργον βουλευσάμενον, οὐκ ἐςὶ τιμωρίας ἄξιον. —— *Ant*. xii. 9.

See *Selden* de *Synedr*. ii. 13. §. 7. *Hammond* on *Rom*. vii. 7. *Grævius* on *Cicero* de Offic. i. 4. and *Grotius* on *Exod*. xx. 17. who obſerves that the wiſer Pagans had much better notions. The ſtory of *Glaucus* is remarkable, who being eſteemed a man of ſingular probity, and having a large ſum of money depoſited in his hands, and an opportunity of keeping it from the owners, if he would forſwear himſelf, conſulted the Oracle at *Delphi* what he ſhould do; ἐπειρωτῶντα δὲ αὐτὸν τὸ χρηςήριον εἰ ὅρκῳ τὰ χρήματα ληΐσεται, ἡ Πυθίη μετέρχεται τοῖσδε τοῖσι ἔπεσι·

Γλαῦκ' Ἐπικυδείδη, τὸ μὲν αὐτίκα κέρδιον ὄτο,
Ὅρκῳ νικήσαι, καὶ χρήματα ληΐσασθαι·
Ὄμνυ· ἐπεὶ θάνατός γε καὶ ἔυορκον μένει ἄνδρα.
Ἀλλ' ὅρκου πάϊς ἐςὶν ἀνώνυμος, οὐδ' ἔπι χεῖρες,
Οὐδὲ πόδες· κραιπνὸς δὲ μετέρχεται, εἰσόκε πᾶσαν
Συμμάρψας ὀλέσῃ γενεὴν, καί οἶκον ἅπαντα·
Ἀνδρὸς δ' ἐυόρκου γενεὴ μετόπισθεν ἀμείνων.

Ταῦτα ἀκούσας ὁ Γλαῦκος συγγνώμην τὸν Θεον παραιτέετο αὐτῷ ἴσχειν τῶν ῥηθέντων· ἡ δὲ Πυθίη ἔφη, Τὸ πειρηθῆναι τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ τὸ ποιῆσαι, ἴσον δύναται. Γλαῦκος μὲν δὴ μεταπεμψάμενος τοὺς Μιλησίους ξείνους, ἀποδιδοῖ σφι τὰ χρήματα. —— Γλαύκου νῦν οὔτε τι ἀπόγονόν ἐςι οὐδὲν, οὔτ' ἐςίη οὐδεμίη

The Goſpel required purity of heart: the *Jews* had ſlight notions of this duty, and placed purity in bodily and ritual purifications.

The

οὐδεμίη νομιζομένη εἶναι Γλαύκου· ἐκτέτριπταί τε πρόῤῥιζος ἐκ Σπάρτης.

When he had propoſed his queſtion, the Prieſteſs of Apollo *anſwered thus:*

If preſent profit claim thy chief regard,
Be bold, and ſwear, and take the obvious prize.
Juſt dealing cannot ſave thee from the grave.
But the oath's Guardian has a nameleſs Son,
Who ſwift and ſtrong, though without hand or foot,
Purſues, o'ertakes, and ſeizes, and deſtroys
The whole devoted race; whilſt honeſt men
Leave laſting bleſſings to their children's children.

Glaucus *hearing this, intreated the god to forgive him what he had ſaid. The Prieſteſs reply'd; To tempt the god, and to commit the action, is all one.* Glaucus *however ſent to recall his* Mileſian *gueſts, and deliver'd them the money.— At preſent there remains no houſe or progeny of* Glaucus, *but it is rooted out from* Sparta. Herodot. vi. p. 359. *Ed. Gron.* See the ſame ſtory related by *Juvenal* xiii. 199.

Compare the words of the Oracle, concerning the Son of the Deity who preſides over oaths, with *Zechar.* v. 1.—— *I looked, and behold, a flying roll.— Then ſaid he unto me, This is the curſe that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth,—and it ſhall enter into the houſe of the thief, and into the houſe of him that ſweareth falſly by my name: and it ſhall remain in the midſt of his houſe; and ſhall conſume it, with the timber thereof, and the ſtones thereof.* The likeneſs between theſe two places is obſerved by *Grotius.*

The

The Goſpel promiſed eternal happineſs to thoſe who would lead religious lives, and to impenitent ſinners denounced the moſt dreadful puniſhments: the *Jews* thought that no *Iſraelite* ſhould be deprived of future happineſs, whatſoever his faults had been,* unleſs he were guilty of apoſtacy, idolatry,

The laſt verſe of the Oracle is to be found in *Heſiod* Ἔργ. 285. and the ſenſe, tho' not the words, of the foregoing lines, 282, &c.

Maimonides indeed, and ſome others, learn'd to talk in a better manner on this ſubject, and more conformably to Chriſtian morality. See *Huet.* Alnet. Quæſt. p. 343.

* Ὑπολαμβάνοντες ὅτι πάντως τοῖς ἀπὸ τῆς σπορᾶς τῆς κατὰ σάρκα τοῦ Ἀβραὰμ ἔσι, κἂν ἁμαρτωλοὶ ὦσι καὶ ἄπιστοι καὶ ἀπειθεῖς πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν, ἡ βασίλεια ἡ διώνιος δοθήσεται. *exiſtimantes eis omnino qui ex ſatu, ſecundum carnem, Abrahami ſunt, quamvis peccatoribus, et infidelibus, et erga Deum immorigeris, regnum æternum datum iri.* Juſtin M. Dial. p. 433. Ed. Thirl.

The School of *Elias* uſed to ſay, that *whoſoever learned the Traditions of the Miſnah might be aſſured he ſhould have eternal life.* See *Grotius* on *Mat.* x. 28. xiv. 2. *James* ii. 14. *Whitb.* on *Acts* i. 25. *Rom.* ii. 13. *James* ii. 11. and p. 466, 467. vol. 2. of 6th Edit.

Perhaps they did not carry this notion ſo far as to affirm that their wicked country-men ſhould receive no correction in a future ſtate, but probably they thought that God, who in their opinion was a reſpecter of perſons, would be gracious to theſe unworthy children of *Abraham*, that their puniſhment ſhould laſt a certain time, and that then they ſhould

idolatry, and a few other crimes which they ſpecified.

The Goſpel gave the *Jews* no hopes that they ſhould ſubdue their enemies, and become a free and independent nation: the *Jews* were very * factious and ſeditious, and had an intemperate love of liberty, at a time

ſhould enter into a ſtate of happineſs, which favour ſhould not be extended to the *Gentiles*, for whom God had no regard. See *Le Clerc*. Quæſt. Hieron. p. 287. *Whitb.* on *Acts* xi. 18. xv. 1. *Rom.* ii. 13. 1 *Cor.* i. 28. 2 *Cor.* xi. 20 *Huet.* Alnet. Quæſt. p. 297. *Windet.* de Vitâ funct. ſtatu. p. 70. 4to. Ed. *Sale*'s notes on the *Coran*. p. 11.

Many *Mohammedan* doctors are much in the ſame way of thinking, and teach that believers ſhall all enter into a ſtate of happineſs after the reſurrection, ſome immediately, others after certain puniſhments, but that infidels ſhall be conſigned over to eternal miſery. See *Reland.* de Relig. Mohammed. and *Sale*'s *Coran*, prelim. diſc. p. 92.

* Their turbulent temper may be known from the *Jus Zelotarum*, or privilege, under the pretence of zeal, to diſpatch an offender without the tedious formality of a trial; concerning which licenciouſneſs *Philo* ſays, injudiciouſly enough, *De Monarch.* I. p. 818. *Ed. Paris* 1640. Καὶ ἐπιτελεῖσθαι δὲ καλὸν ἅπασι τοῖς ζῆλον ἔχουσιν ἀρετῆς, ἐκ χειρὸς ἀναπεάτειν ἀνυπερθέτως τὰς τιμωρίας, μήτ' εἰς δικαστήριον, μήτ' εἰς βουλευτήριον, μήτε συνόλως ἐπ' ἀρχὴν ἄγοντας, ἀλλὰ τῷ παραυτίκα μισοπονήρῳ πάθει καὶ φιλοθέῳ καλαχρῆσθαι πρὸς τὰς τῶν ἀσεβῶν ἀπαραιτήτους κολάσεις, νομίσαντας ἀνίους ὑπὸ τῦ καιροῦ τὰ πάντα γεγενῆσθαι, βουλευτὰς, δικαστὰς, στρατηγὸς, ἐκκλησιαστὰς, καθηγόρους, μάρτυρας,

a time and in circumſtances when it was not to be obtained.

The Goſpel called the *Jews* to ſufferings and perſecution, and had at that time a very unpromiſing aſpect as to this world. A converted *Jew* could expect nothing beſides ill uſage from his country-men, who

μάλιστας, νόμες, δῆμον, ἵνα μηδενὸς ὄντος ἐμποδὼν, ἄφοβοι συνόδῳ πολλῇ περαγωνίζωνται ὁσιότητος.

This alſo is right, that all who have a zeal for virtue are allowed to execute rigorous puniſhment without delay, neither carrying the offender to the courts of judicature, nor to any magiſtrate, but indulging that ardour which the hatred of iniquity and the love of God excites, to the end that the impious may never eſcape vengeance, and accounting themſelves, by the exigence of the time, to be made all things, ſenators, judges, generals, aſſemblies, accuſers, witneſſes, laws and people, that ſo nothing may hinder them from exerting themſelves boldly and jointly for righteouſneſs.

The love of God and of virtue and of truth is no ſuch turbulent and boiſterous paſſion, and pious zeal may be active and yet not pernicious, and ſhine without burning. Intemperate Zeal is like *Sirius* in *Homer*:

Λαμπρότατος μὲν ὅγ' ἐστὶ, κακὸν δέ τε σῆμα τέτυκται,
Καὶ τε φέρει πολλὸν πυρετὸν δειλοῖσι βροτοῖσι.

Il. x. 30.

Ille quidem clarâ, ſed ſævâ luce coruſcat,
Et morbos æſtuſque adfert mortalibus ægris.

Pious Zeal is like the *gentle Flame* in *Virgil*:

Ecce levis ſubito de vertice viſus Iüli
Fundere lumen apex, tactuque innoxia mollis
Lambere flamma comas, et circum tempora paſci. Æn. ii.

were

were very zealous for their religion; and if he were the only one of his family who received Chriſtianity, he might be ſure that his worſt enemies would be his neareſt relations, and his moſt inveterate foes thoſe of his own houſhold. It required no ſmall virtue and reſolution to offer up ſuch a ſacrifice to God, to forſake houſe and land, friends and kindred, father and mother, wife and children, for the ſake of Chriſt.

The *Jews* were accuſtomed to * indulge themſelves without reſtraint in thoſe things which the Law allowed for the hardneſs of their hearts: here the Goſpel interpoſed with ſtrict prohibitions, repreſenting the cuſtom of divorce and of marrying again, as it was practiſed by them, as no better than adultery. The Apoſtles themſelves thought this, when they firſt heard it, to be a hard precept; and indeed, † in all parts of the world where theſe practiſes have been eſtabliſhed, nothing has ſtopped the progreſs of Chriſtianity more than the

* See *Whitby* on *John* viii. 7.

† See *Bayle* Dict. MAHOMET GALADIN. & *Parrhaſiana*, ch. 7.

prohibition

prohibition of * polygamy and divorce, and many, who elſe ſeemed diſpoſed to receive the Goſpel, have rejected it upon this only account.

Laſtly, the *Jews* thought that the Chriſtian † morality was in general too ſtrict and ſevere, and that no man could poſſibly practiſe it.

The chief prieſts, Scribes and Phariſees, beſides all theſe prejudices already mentioned, had particular motives to reject the Goſpel.

They hated Chriſt, becauſe he had reproved and openly expoſed their pride, their hypocriſy, their uncharitableneſs, their

* Chriſt and the Apoſtles have not perhaps directly, and in ſo many words, prohibited polygamy; but from the reaſoning of Chriſt againſt divorce, Chriſtians have juſtly concluded polygamy to be unlawful. Of the evils ariſing from both, ſee *Le Clerc* Hiſt. Eccleſ. Proleg. p. 113. 161.

† *Trypho* ſays to *Juſtin*, ὑμῶν δὲ καὶ τὰ ἐν τῷ λεγομένῳ εὐαγγελίῳ παραγγέλματα θαυμαστὰ ἴσως καὶ μεγάλα ἐπίσαμαι εἶναι, ὡς ὑπολαμβάνειν μηδένα δύνασθαι φυλάξαι αὐτά. *Veſtra ſane quæ in evangelio, quod dicitur, ſunt præcepta tam magna et admiranda eſſe novimus, ut ſuſpicio noſtra ſit a nemine ea ſervari poſſe.*

So alſo ſays *Orobius* in his diſpute with *Limborch*.

See *Tillotſon* Vol. 1. Serm. 28. The *Jews* taught that a careful obſervance of ſome laws would excuſe the violation of the reſt. See *Whitby* on *James* ii. 11.

covetouſneſs,

covetouſneſs, their zeal for traditions; and their hatred againſt him diſpoſed them to think ill of him, and to do him all ill offices. We need not wonder when we find them upon all occaſions oppoſing and calumniating him, if we conſider that they were a wicked ſet of men, and that he had publickly and frequently reproved them. They were highly incenſed againſt him, and in the judgment which they made of him, they were directed by their paſſions, not by their reaſon.

Nor did anger and reſentment only furniſh them with prejudices againſt Chriſt, but ſelf-intereſt alſo and worldly policy. The people, who had ſeen the miracles of Chriſt, particularly that miracle by which he had fed a great multitude, had at one time, as St. *John* relates, a deſign to make him their king, concluding reaſonably enough that under ſuch a leader they ſhould be victorious. Therefore Chriſt, if he had been a deceiver, and had entertained ambitious deſigns, might eaſily have made himſelf a prince, and might have incited the people to ſhake off the *Roman* yoke, which was grievous to them.

The

The chief prieſts and principal perſons amongſt the *Jews* thought, that if Chriſt ſhould make ſuch an attempt they ſhould be ruined, whatſoever the conſequence of it were. If the *Jews* under his conduct ſhould endeavour to recover their liberties, and fail in it, they knew that the nation would be ſeverely puniſhed by the *Romans*. Nor was their proſpect leſs bad, if Chriſt ſhould deliver the people from their ſubjection to a foreign power, and rule over them himſelf; for though they hated the *Romans*, yet doubtleſs they thought that Chriſt would be a worſe ruler for them than any *Roman* governor. They knew that he had a bad opinion of them, and that he had expoſed their vices, and therefore they concluded that the eſtabliſhment of his authority would be the ruin of theirs. Thus were they incited not only by reſentment, but, as they fancied, by intereſt, to deny that Chriſt was the *Meſſias*, to oppoſe him, and to deſtroy him; for, ſince they were perſuaded that the *Meſſias* ſhould be a temporal king, they could not acknowledge Chriſt to be the *Meſſias*, unleſs at the

ſame time they owned him to be their king.

They ſucceeded in their endeavours, they ſtirred up the people, they intimidated the governor, they prevailed to have Chriſt crucified, and by his death they thought themſelves at laſt ſecure from all theſe evils. But he aroſe again, and his diſciples appeared openly in *Jeruſalem*, working miracles, and teaching that Jeſus was the *Meſſias*. One would at firſt think that no man could withſtand ſuch evidence; but we ſhall not ſo much wonder at their obſtinacy, if we obſerve that their fears, and, as they thought, their intereſts led them again to oppoſe the truth.

They conſidered that they were the perſons who had repreſented Chriſt as a madman, an impoſtor, a magician, a violator of the law, who had inſtigated the people and who had perſuaded *Pilate* to crucify him; they heard that the Apoſtles wrought miracles in the name of Chriſt, and they concluded that if the Apoſtles were permitted to proceed in this manner, they would convert a great part of the *Jews*, and they feared that if the doctrines taught by

Chriſt's diſciples ſhould be received, they who had been his implacable enemies, ſhould be accounted not only ignorant and blind guides, but diſhoneſt men, that they ſhould not only loſe their credit and authority, but be expoſed to the reſentment of the incenſed multitude; and therefore they thought that the beſt way to ſecure themſelves was to deter and hinder the Apoſtles from appearing any more in public, and from preaching the Goſpel. And when the diſciples continued to perform the functions of their miniſtry, the high prieſt aſked them, ſaying, *Did we not ſtraightly command you that you ſhould not teach in this name? And behold, ye have filled Jeruſalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.*

Miracles were wrought to convince them; but when a man is violently bent to believe or diſbelieve, he is more than half perſuaded that things are as he deſires. They haſtily concluded that thoſe miracles were either deluſions and impoſtures, or wonderful works performed by the aid of evil ſpirits.

From

From theſe ill diſpoſitions proceeded ſuitable effects; for they perſecuted the firſt Chriſtians, they accuſed them to the Roman magiſtrates of ſedition, they beat them in their ſynagogues, they impriſoned them, they baniſhed them, they put many of them to death, and ſtrove to the utmoſt of their power to deſtroy this riſing ſect. Some * ancient writers aſſure us, that the *Jews* took the pains to ſend perſons from *Jeruſalem* into all countries, to accuſe the Chriſtians of atheiſm and other crimes, and to make them as odious as they poſſibly could.

From the account which we have given of the obſtinacy of the *Jews*, and of the cauſes whence it aroſe, it appears that their unbelief is no objection to the truth of the Goſpel. The modern *Jews* therefore reaſon weakly when they ſay, that their anceſtors would not, and could not have rejected Chriſt, if the miracles related in the Goſpel had been really wrought. Againſt this argument we may alſo obſerve, that it can do no ſervice to a *Jew*, becauſe it would prove

* *Juſtin M.* and *Euſebius*. See *Juſtin* p. 171. and *Thirlby*'s Notes, and *Fabricius* de Ver. R. C. p. 665.

too much. It would prove that *Moſes* wrought no miracles, ſince the whole people of *Iſrael* often rebelled againſt him: it would prove that many of the prophets recorded in the Old Teſtament were falſe prophets, becauſe they were perſecuted by the *Jews*. The *Jews* are not able to give any reaſon * why they acknowledge the Law of *Moſes* to be a divine revelation, which will not directly and more ſtrongly eſtabliſh the truth and authority of the Goſpel.

The GENTILES had many prejudices in common with the *Jews*, and ſome peculiar to themſelves.

The cauſes of unbelief which were common to them with the *Jews* were, a great

* This argument is uſed by *Origen* contr. Celſ. I. p. 32. and frequently through the whole treatiſe. *Orobius*, being preſs'd with it by *Limborch*, was forced to make two aukward conceſſions; firſt, that a *Jew* could not prove his religion to a Deiſt; and ſecondly, that it became every Chriſtian and *Jew* to continue in the religion in which he had been educated, becauſe each had arguments to urge which the other could not confute. See *Limborch*'s Collat. & Le Clerc Bibl. Choiſ. xxiv. p. 359. The heretic *Apelles* ſaid much the ſame thing, namely, μὴ δεῖν ὅλως ἐξετάζειν τὸν λόγον, ἀλλ' ἕκαστον ὡς πεπίστευκε διαμένειν Euſebius E. H. v. 13.

corrup-

corruption of manners, the prejudice of education, the purity of the precepts of the Goſpel ſo oppoſite to their vitious inclinations, the temporal inconveniences which attended the profeſſion of Chriſtianity, and the temporal advantages which might be ſecured or obtained by rejecting or oppoſing it, the poor appearance which Chriſt had made in the world, and his ignominious death, which they could not reconcile with the divine power aſcribed to him by his diſciples; theſe things produced in the greater part of the *Jews* an averſion to the Goſpel, and they had the ſame effect on the unconverted *Gentiles*.

The *Gentiles* ought not to have ſlighted and rejected the Goſpel upon account of the low eſtate and ſufferings of Chriſt and his Apoſtles. Their own reaſon, and ſome of their moſt approved writers might have taught them not to value perſons according to their greatneſs and riches, nor to meaſure the favour of God by temporal happineſs, but to love and honour oppreſs'd innocence.

They might have remembred that the beſt man and the wiſeſt philoſopher record-

ed

ed in their hiſtories, lived all his days in * poverty, was expoſed to ſlander and calumny, and at laſt was accuſed by falſe witneſſes, and condemned to die by unjuſt judges.

They knew that Virtue often obtains not the eſteem and reſpect which it deſerves, that it often lies concealed from the world, or, being placed in view, is yet not obſerved, and that poſterity frequently does juſtice to the characters † of illuſtrious perſons whoſe good qualities have been overlooked by thoſe amongſt whom they dwelt.

They knew that Virtue, though it be ſo amiable in itſelf, has a luſtre offenſive to the vitious, that therefore Pride, and Ignorance, andEnvy, and Malice, andCenſoriouſneſs will join to obſcure and miſrepreſent it, will en-

* ἐγὼ μὲν οἶμαι, ἔφη ὁ Σωκράτης, εἰ ἀγαθῷ ὠνητῷ ἐντύχοιμι, εὑρεῖν ἄν μοι σὺν τῇ οἰκίᾳ καὶ τὰ ὄντα πάντα ῥᾳδίως πέντε μνᾶς. *I believe, ſaid* Socrates, *that, if I ſhould meet with a good purchaſer, my effects, houſe and all would eaſily fetch me ſixteen pounds.* Xenoph. *Oeconom.* I. 3.

Socrates, amicis audientibus: Emiſſem, inquit, pallium, ſi nummos haberem, &c. Seneca *de Benef.* VII. 24.

In Plato's *Apol. Socrat.* he ſays that he is *in extreme poverty,* ἐν πενίᾳ μυείᾳ εἰμὶ.

† Quamdiu Catonem civitas ignoravit? reſpuit, nec intellexit, niſi cum perdidit. Seneca.

deavour

deavour to make it contemptible, and to bring it to a level with themſelves.

They knew that he beſt deſerved the name of a wiſe and good man who lived up to the rules of morality which he had preſcribed to others; and they ought to have admired a man who at the ſame time that he recommended to his followers humility, patience and reſignation to the will of God under the ſevereſt trials, forgiveneſs of injuries, and univerſal love and charity, practiſed theſe duties himſelf in their full extent, and was a perfect example of all that he taught.

The *Gentiles* could not conceive how one who ſeemed hated and forſaken of God ſhould reſtore men to the favour of God, and how his ſufferings could be ſerviceable to that end.

It is reaſonable that the Divine mercy ſhould conſtantly diſplay itſelf in all caſes which lie within the reach of compaſſion. Such was the caſe of us men, who though ſinful, yet are weak and frail beings, though offenders, yet corrigible and capable of amendment.

But it is alſo reaſonable that God ſhould be diſpleaſed at the rebellion and tranſgreſſi-

ons of his creatures, that he ſhould ſhew his diſapprobation of iniquity, and ſo grant his pardon, as at the ſame time to vindicate the honour of his government and of his laws. Now this he has accompliſhed in a moſt illuſtrious manner in the death of his Son, thereby ſhewing his hatred to ſin in keeping ſinners at a diſtance, and refuſing to hear them in their own name, and in beſtowing his favours only through the mediation of one, who *ſuffered for their offences, and roſe again for their juſtification.*

It is farther reaſonable that even this Interceſſor ſhould not interpoſe in our behalf, if we prefer vice to virtue, and therefore the Goſpel has taught us that Chriſt's death ſhall be no attonement for us, nor his reſurrection of any benefit to us, unleſs we uſe our beſt endeavours to die to ſin and to live to God.

An example of goodneſs ſet before us for our imitation, encouragement to practiſe the virtues which are moſt conſpicuous in adverſity, which at the ſame time adorn it and ſoften its harſh nature, reliance upon him who underwent ſo much for our ſake, hope that he will be a merciful judge, motives from gratitude to love him more than our

ſins

ſins who loved us more than his own life, the fears of departing hence conſiderably aſſuaged, theſe are benefits ariſing from the ſufferings of our Maſter, and uſeful purpoſes which ſeem to be better anſwered by this method of our redemption, than they would have been if Chriſt had deſcended from heaven to proclaim forgiveneſs of ſins upon repentance, and to teach men their duty, and then had left the world without undergoing the evils to which he ſubmitted.

The *Gentiles* thought it ſtrange to aſcribe ſuch power and authority to a crucified man.

But, the greateſt power which any perſon can ſhew, conſiſts unqueſtionably in performing things which no other can do, unleſs God aſſiſt him in an extraordinary manner. To deſtroy the peace of mankind, and carry ruin and deſolation through populous countries, is no more than what human ſtrength and human policy can accompliſh. Many have done this who have not poſſeſs'd one commendable quality. To be honoured, admired, truſted, reverenced, and beloved, theſe are advantages which may be obtained without any ſupernatural aid. But, as the *Pſalmiſt* obſerves, no man by the multi-

multitude of his riches, or the eminence of his ſtation, can deliver his brother, or himſelf from death, or make agreement unto God for him. For it coſt more to redeem their ſouls, ſo that he muſt let that alone for ever. Therefore he who can heal all ſickneſſes and diſeaſes by ſpeaking a word, who can reſtore the dead to life, who can confer the ſame power upon others, who can deliver himſelf from the grave, is as much ſuperior to the rich, the rulers, and the heroes of this world, as the heavens are above the earth.

If he had appeared in power and ſplendor, if he had ſubdued vice by force of arms, and eſtabliſhed his kingdom upon earth, and ruled over the willing nations, giving them juſt and holy laws, and taking innocence and virtue under his protection, ſuch an enterprize, ſo accompliſhed, had indeed been great and glorious; but as in this caſe the means would have been proportionate to the end, it would have been nothing when compared with the deliverance which he wrought, and the victories which he gained, not by human means, nor by worldly wiſdom, but by a moſt wonderful and unparal-

lel'd

lel'd method, by ſubmitting to poverty and contempt, by avoiding honours, by ſuffering indignities, by dying upon the croſs, by ſending out a few ignorant and obſcure men, who with no other arms than patience and meekneſs, and with no other art than ſpeaking the truth, though oppoſed by the learned and the mighty, introduced a religion which ſpread itſelf through the world.

The national religion of the Heathen, and their idolatrous worſhip, as eſtabliſhed by their laws and cuſtoms, and received by the vulgar, was ſo ſtrange, abſurd and inconſiſtent, beſides its variety in different countries, that it is not eaſy to give an account of it. But briefly, and in general, it ſeems to have been founded on theſe ſuppoſitions:

That there were many Gods, one of whom was ſuperior to the reſt;

That they were all concerned in the government of the world, and could do good or hurt to men, as they were diſpoſed;

That they were far ſuperior to men in power and knowledge, as alſo that they were immortal, but that elſe * they had like

* The inferior deities.

paſſions

paſſions with men, were capricious, revengeful, and eaſily provoked;

That they only expected to have magnificent temples built for them, adorned with rich gifts, ſtatues erected and ſacrifices offered to them, hymns ſung in their praiſe, perſons dedicated to their ſervice, feaſts and ſolemnities kept in honour of them, that whoſoever paid them ſuch outward reſpect was religious, ſo that religion and virtue were two things. Add to this * that ſome ſolemn rites conſiſted in cruel, impure or indecent actions.

The *Gentiles*, though they had for the moſt part mean and falſe notions of religion, were more wicked than ignorant. We need not appeal to the teſtimony of the firſt Chriſtians and to the Epiſtles of St. *Paul* for the truth of this: The Heathen writers, their poets, philoſophers, and hiſtorians have left ſad deſcriptions or ſcandalous proofs of the extreme corruption of the age in which they lived. Such a degeneracy amongſt the *Gentiles* would probably produce in them an

* *Juſtin* xxi. 3. *Euſebius* de Vit. Conſt. III. 55, 58. Orat. de Laud. Conſt. 9. 13. *Socrates* Hiſt. Eccl. III. 2. *Le Clerc* on Exod. xxxiv. 15. *Whitby* on Epheſ. v. 4.

averſion

averſion to a pure and holy religion, and to the diſagreeable truths which oppoſed their favourite inclinations, and a diſlike to thoſe troubleſome reformers who undertook to ſhew them the neceſſity of breaking off their bad courſes.

The philoſophers and other learned Pagans ſcorned, no leſs than the *Jewiſh* teachers, to be inſtructed by poor and obſcure and illiterate men; and as the *Jews* objected that none of their rulers believed in Chriſt, ſo the *Gentiles* obſerved with great contempt, that the firſt proſelytes to Chriſtianity were chiefly of the lower ſort.

The philoſophers and the more learned amongſt the *Gentiles* might be ranked under three ſorts:

Such as worſhipped one ſupreme God, and many inferior who under him governed the world;

Such as thought that there was no knowledge and certainty;

Such as believed no God, or no providence.

Their pride and high opinion of themſelves would not ſuffer them to condeſcend to be taught by men of no reading and learning,

ing, and their firm adherence to their ſeveral ſects, for which they were remarkable, made them obſtinate in reſiſting the beſt arguments. There were in particular two or three notions much prevailing amongſt them, which increaſed their prejudices againſt the Goſpel:

Firſt, that the learned might think as they would, and diſpute as much as they thought fit, but that they ought to conform to the religion of their country, and keep it up, as it was delivered to them by their anceſtors;

Secondly, that * God did not require that all nations ſhould be of the ſame religion, but was well pleaſed with the variety of worſhip whſch obtained in different places, according to the different notions which men had of the divine nature;

Thirdly, †which ſeems to be a conſequence of the two opinions before mentioned, that religion

* Vid. Socratem *Hiſt. Eccl.* IV. 32. Themiſt. *Orat.* 7. *ad Valent. Symmach.* apud *Prudent.* II. 773.

† *Seneca* ſays, concerning the religion of his country: *Quæ omnia ſapiens ſervabit, tanquam legibus juſſa, non tanquam Diis grata.* And —— *Omnem iſtam ignobilem deorum turbam,*

religion or piety towards the Gods, as it is diſtinguiſhed from morality, was a thing of ſmall moment in itſelf, and to be obſerved for reaſons of ſtate and for political purpoſes.

They had no notion of refuſing to comply with eſtabliſhed rites under pretence of conſcience. They accounted Chriſtians * inexcuſably obſtinate and perverſe when they would not ſacrifice to idols, and no better than fools and madmen, when they would ſuffer death rather than ſubmit to the command of the Magiſtrate.

Theſe were the perſons who deſpiſed and ridiculed the firſt Chriſtians, who reſiſted the Goſpel during its progreſs, who wrote againſt it, and were the laſt defenders of

turbam, quam longo ævo, longa ſuperſtitio congeſſit, ſic adorabimus, ut meminerimus cultum ejus magis ad morem, quam ad rem pertinere. Apud *Auguſtin.* de Civ. Dei. VI. 10.

Hortabaris me] *ut — opiniones, quas a majoribus accepimus de Diis immortalibus, ſacra, cæremonias, religioneſque defenderem. Ego verò eas defendam ſemper, ſemperque defendi; nec me ex eâ opinione, quam a majoribus accepi de cultu Deorum immortalium, ullius unquam oratio aut docti aut indocti movebit,* &c. Cotta, apud *Cicer.* De Nat. Deor. III. 2.

* *Neque enim dubitabam, qualecunque eſſet quod fatebantur, pervicaciam certe et inflexibilem obſtinationem debere puniri.* Plin. *Epiſt.* x. 97.

Paganiſm

Paganiſm, when under the Chriſtian Emperors it was in a very declining condition.

In the heathen world were alſo many thouſands who lived by the ſuperſtition of mankind, and who therefore would eagerly oppoſe a new doctrine, which if it prevailed, would put an end to their gain; and though, being illiterate, they could not write and diſpute for Paganiſm, as the philoſophers did, yet they could lie * in behalf of it, and denounce the wrath of the Gods, and ſtir up the populace againſt the Chriſtians.

And accordingly, from time to time, † oracles were given out, either real or pretended, either by evil ſpirits, or by evil men, complaining of the Chriſtians, as of enemies to the Gods, and exciting the *Gentiles* againſt them.

But the moſt dangerous enemies to Chriſtianity were Magiſtrates, Princes, Roman

* *Haruſpices has fabulas, conjectores, arioli, vates, et nunquam non vani concinnavere fanatici; qui ne ſuæ artes intereant, ac ne ſtipes exiguas conſultoribus excutiant jam raris, ſi quando vos velle rem venire in invidiam compererunt, negliguntur Dii, clamitant*, &c. Arnobius, L. I. p. 13.

† Lamprid. *Alexand.* 43. p. 993. in *Hiſt. Aug. Script.* Euſeb. *Vit. Conſt.* II. 50, 51. Sozomen. V. 19. Chryſoſt. *Homil. de* Babylâ.

Empe-

Emperors. When theſe were ſuperſtitious, or capricious and cruel, or when they thought it prudent to oppoſe any change in religion, leſt it ſhould hurt the ſtate, the Chriſtians were expoſed to the fury of mercileſs tyrants. Of theſe Emperors ſome were remarkable for all wickedneſs; they had a will to do any miſchief, and nothing to hinder them from doing as they would. They aſſumed to themſelves divine honours, and hated every thing that looked like goodneſs, courage and liberty. Under ſome of theſe Emperors the Chriſtians were treated with great inhumanity and cruelty; and, which ſeems ſtrange, they met with ill uſage under * ſome who had ſeveral good qualities, and from whom better things might have been expected; but the reaſons for it ſeem to have been partly theſe:

1. Thoſe Emperors who had many virtues, yet had their prejudices, † or their ſuper-

* Trajan, T. Antoninus, M. Aurelius.

† The Emperor M. Aurelius was prejudiced againſt the Chriſtians, and in his own Book xi. 3. has cenſured very unreaſonably, what he ought to have approved, their readineſs and reſolution to die for their religion.

ſuperſtition, and Chriſtianity had been miſrepreſented to them; nor are any perſons more liable than princes to receive bad impreſſions and falſe accounts, and to have the truth concealed from them.

2. By the † ancient *Roman* laws it was not permitted to introduce any new religion without

Aliud erat quod maximè gentiles in Chriſtianos commovebat, quod hi ſcilicet pro bono Reipublicæ ſtatu, aut Imperatorum, vel patriæ ſalute offerri ſacrificia improbarent, iiſque nec adeſſe, nec etiam ſive per publicos, ſive per privatos Imperatorum genios jurare acquieſcerent. Ad hæc, Chriſtiani a feſtis ſolemnibus, ludis publicis, aliiſque ejuſmodi ſpectaculis quæ pro victoriis adverſus hoſtes partis, aut Imperatorum natalitiis fieri conſueverant, ſeſe abhorrere teſtabantur. Hinc mirum non eſt, ſi Imperatores, etiam qui religioſiores et mitiſſimi habiti ſunt, Chriſtianos penitùs extirpare conati fuerint, quos nempe non religioni ſolùm ſuæ, ſed etiam propriæ ſaluti adverſari exiſtimabant. Ruinart. *Præf. in Act. Martyr.*

† *Tertullian* and *Euſebius* ſay that the *Romans* had an ancient law, which forbad the worſhip of new Deities without the permiſſion of the Senate; *ne quis Deus conſecraretur, niſi a Senatu probatus.* Apolog. παλαίȣ νόμȣ κεκρατηκότος, μὴ ἄλλως τινὰ παρὰ Ῥωμαίοις θεοποιεῖσθαι, μὴ ȣ̓χὶ ψήφῳ καὶ δόγματι συγκλήτȣ. *Eccl. H.* II. 2.

Julius Paulus, who lived in the time of the emperor *Alexander Severus*, has preſerved to us an ancient law relating to this ſubject: *Qui novas, et uſu vel ratione incognitas religiones inducunt, ex quibus animi hominum moveantur, honeſtiores deportantur, humiliores capite puniuntur.* Sentent. Receptar. L. V. *Tit.* 21.

Under

without the leave of the Magiſtrate, much leſs a religion which directly tended to overturn all the eſtabliſh'd rites and ceremonies.

3. The

Under the ſame *Title*, he has another law againſt ſoothſayers and pretenders to inſpiration, who are ordered to be beaten, baniſhed, &c. *ne humanâ credulitate publici mores ad ſpem alicujus rei corrumperentur, vel certe ex eo populares animi turbarentur.*

In the *Acts of the Apoſtles* xvi. 21. ſome of the inhabitants of *Philippi* bring this accuſation againſt *Paul* and *Silas*: *Theſe men teach cuſtoms which are not lawful for us to receive neither to obſerve, being Romans.* Where ſee *Grotius.*

Cicero *de Leg.* XI. 8. *Separatim nemo habeſſit Deos; neve novos, ſed ne advenas, niſi publice adſcitos, privatim colunto.* [In the ſame book *ſacra nocturna* are accounted unlawful without particular leave.]

Plato has the ſame law. Ἱερὰ μηδὲ εἷς ἐν ἰδίαις οἰκίαις ἐκτήθω. θύειν δ' ὅταν ἐπὶ νοῦν ἴῃ τινὶ, πρὸς τὰ δημόσια ἴτω θύσων· &c. *Sacella nemo in privatâ domo habeat. Cum verò animum quis ad ſacrificandum induxerit, ad publica ſacrificaturus accedat.* &c. and the tranſgreſſors of this law are to be puniſhed. *De Leg.* X.

Porphyry ſays of *Ammonius*, who, as he pretends, left Chriſtianity for Paganiſm, πρὸς τὴν κατὰ νόμους πολιτείαν μετεβάλετο, *ad vivendi rationem legibus conſentientem deſcivit*, whereas *Origen* (ſays he) lived Χριστιανῶς καὶ παρανόμως. *Euſeb.* E. H. VI. 19. This was the common language of the *Pagans.*

If *Ulpian*'s Treatiſe on the duty of Proconſuls were extant, we ſhould know what Edicts had been publibed againſt Chriſtians by the Emperors, down to the time of *Alexander Severus. Domitius* [Ulpianus] *de officio Proconſulis Libro* VII. *Reſcripta principum nefaria collegit, ut doceret quibus*

 pœnis

3. The people and * the Governors of provinces ſometimes perſecuted the Chriſtians

pœnis adfici oporteret eos, qui ſe cultores Dei confiterentur. Lactantius *Inſt. Div.* V. 11.

Pliny, in his memorable Epiſtle to *Trajan* X. 97. enquires of him how he ſhould proceed againſt the Chriſtians.

Trajan, in his Reſcript, ſo far ſpared the Chriſtians, that he forbad them to be ſought after, or to be condemned upon the evidence of nameleſs informations. But, if a proſecutor appeared, he ordered them to be put to death, unleſs they recanted. *Plin.* Ep. X. 98.

However, as *Pliny*'s Letter to *Trajan* did not ſet the Chriſtians in a bad light, ſo the Emperor's reply was in ſome meaſure favourable to them. He ſeemed willing to connive at them, and not to uſe them rigorouſly.

Afterwards *Adrian* gave a Reſcript to *Minucius Fundanus*, [to be found in *Euſeb.* IV. 9. and at the end of *Juſtin*'s firſt Apol.] which it obſcure. It does not manifeſtly exempt Chriſtians from puniſhment; and yet it ſeems in ſome degree to favour them, and might have been ſo interpreted by a judge who was diſpoſed to put the mildeſt conſtruction upon it. The Chriſtians often appealed to it.

* See *Euſebius* E. H. VI. 41. IX. 6. where it is ſaid that Peter of *Alexandria* ἀθρόως ὄντω καὶ ἀλόγως, ὡς ἂν Μαξιμίνου προστάξαντος, τὴν κεφαλὴν ἀποτέμνεται· which *Valeſius* tranſlates, *ſubito et abſque ullâ probabili cauſſâ, utpote Maximino jubente, capite truncatur.* I think it ſhould be, *quaſi juſſiſſet Maximinus.* The edicts againſt Chriſtians were then repealed, and *Maximinus* at that time rather ſecretly encouraged than openly commanded thoſe cruelties.

Melito, biſhop of *Sardes*, in the apology which he dedicated to the Emperor M. Aurelius, ſays; τὸ γὰρ οὐδὲ πώποτε γενόμενον, νῦν διώκεται τὸ τῶν θεοσεβῶν γένος, καινοῖς ἐλαυνό-

ans without any particular leave or order from the Emperor.

4. The

ἐλαυνόμενον δόγμασι κατὰ τὴν Ἀσίαν· οἱ γὰρ ἀναιδεῖς συκοφάνται καὶ τῶν ἀλλοτρίων ἐρασταὶ, τὴν ἐκ τῶν διαταγμάτων ἔχοντες ἀφορμὴν, φανερῶς λῃστεύουσι, νύκτωρ καὶ μεθημέραν διαρπάζοντες τοὺς μηδὲν ἀδικοῦντας. —— καὶ εἰ μὲν σὺ κελεύσαντος ταῦτα πεπραγέναι, ἔστω καλῶς γινόμενον· δίκαιος γὰρ βασιλεὺς οὐκ ἂν ἀδίκως βουλεύσαιτο πώποτε· καὶ ἡμεῖς ἡδέως φέρομεν τὸ τοιοῦτον θανάτου τὸ γέρας. ταύτην δέ σοι μόνην προσφέρομεν δέησιν, ἵνα αὐτὸς πεῖραν ἐπιγνοὺς τῆς τοιαύτης φιλονεικίας ἐργάτας, δικαίως κείνοις εἰ ἄξιοι θανάτου καὶ τιμωρίας, ἢ σωτηρίας καὶ ἡσυχίας εἰσίν· εἰ δὲ καὶ παρὰ σοῦ μὴ ἦν ἡ βουλὴ αὕτη καὶ τὸ καινὸν τοῦτο διάταγμα, ὃ μηδὲ καλὰ βαρβάρων πρέπει πολεμίων, πολὺ μᾶλλον δεόμεθά σου, μὴ περιιδεῖν ἡμᾶς ἐν τοιαύτῃ δημώδει λεηλασίᾳ. *Pious men are now perſecuted and harraſſed through all* Aſia *by new decrees, which was never done before: for impudent ſycophants, and ſuch as covet the poſſeſſions of others, taking occaſion from the edicts, rob without fear or ſhame, and ceaſe not to plunder thoſe who in nothing have offended.* —*And if theſe things are done by your order, it is enough, all is well, for a juſt Prince can never decree any thing that is unjuſt, and we ſhall take a pleaſure in ſubmitting to your will, and account it an honour to die at your command. Only this favour we beg of you, that you would firſt inform your ſelf concerning men who are obſtinate and inflexible,* [in a good cauſe, as they think, in a bad one, as their enemies pretend] *and then judge, as your own equity ſhall direct, whether they deſerve puniſhment and death, or impunity and quiet. But if this reſolution and this new decree, not fit to be enacted againſt barbarians and enemies, proceeds not from you, much more may we entreat you that you would not give us up unprotected to this publick injury and popular devaſtation.* v. *Euſeb.* E. H. IV. 26.

4. The Emperors diſliked the frequent *aſſemblies and clandeſtine meetings of Chriſtians

The place deſerves to be produced, were it only to ſhew the politeneſs of the old Chriſtian Apologiſt. In the Interpretation of φιλονεικίας I have followed *Valeſius*, to whom I refer the reader.

* *Ab nullo genere non æque ſummum periculum eſt, ſi cœtus et concilia, et ſecretas conſultationes eſſe ſinas.* M. Porcius Cato, apud *Liv.* XXXIV. 2. At Crotona, *trecenti ex juvenibus cum — ſeparatam a ceteris civibus vitam exercerent, quaſi cœtum clandeſtinæ conjurationis haberent, civitatem in ſe converterunt*, &c. Juſtin. XX. 4.

Mæcenas is ſaid by *Dio Caſſius*, LII. p. 561. *Ed. Steph.* to have given this advice to *Auguſtus*; τὸ μὲν θεῖον, πάνῃ πάντως αὐτός τε σέβε καὶ τὰ πάτρια, καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ἀνάγκαζε· τοὺς δὲ ξενίζοντας τί περὶ αὐτὸ καὶ μίσει καὶ κόλαζε, μὴ μόνον τῶν θεῶν ἕνεκα,—ἀλλ' ὅτι καινά τινα δαιμόνια οἱ τοιοῦτοι ἀνεισφέροντες πολλοὺς ἀναπείθουσιν ἀλλοτριονομεῖν· καὶ τοῦτο καὶ συνωμοσίαι, καὶ συστάσεις, ἑταιρίαι τε γίγνονται, ἅπερ ἥκιστα μοναρχίᾳ συμφέρει· *Worſhip the deity your ſelf, by all means, according to the cuſtom of the country, and compel others to do the ſame; and abhor and puniſh all thoſe who would make any innovations in religion, not only for the ſake of the gods,—— but becauſe ſuch perſons, ſubſtituting new deities, prevail upon many to obſerve foreign laws and inſtitutions; and hence ariſe conſpiracies, confederacies and fraternities, which are not at all expedient in a monarchy.*

Pliny tells *Trajan* that he had forbidden ſuch ſocieties, and that the Chriſtians had obeyed his order —— *quod ipſum facere deſiſſe poſt edictum meum, quo, ſecundum mandata tua, hetæerias eſſe vetueram.*

Magi

ſtians, as giving an opportunity to cabals and conſpiracies.

5. Chriſtians were ſometimes perſecuted in a manner which (upon the Pagan ſuppoſition that they offended againſt the laws and deſerved to die for it) muſt be acknowledged not to have been the moſt violent and bloody; for it appears evidently in Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory, and in the Acts of the

Magi auctores fuere Trajano ut hæterias, *id eſt, ſodalitates ſive collegia omnia, vetaret, ut videre eſt apud Plinium,* exceptis quæ religionis nomine, *Paganicæ ſcilicet* coïbant, L. I. §. Sed religionis, C. *de Collegiis. Cum verò homines naturâ ament ſodalitates, factum inde ut nemo eſſet in Imperio Romano qui non in ſodalitatem deorum alicui dicatam nomen daret,* &c. Grotius ad *Apoc.* XIII. 16. See alſo *Columbus* on the writer *de Mortib. Perſec.* c. 34.

Severus gave a reſcript ordering information to be made to the Prefect of *Rome* againſt thoſe who ſhould hold unlawful aſſemblies; which probably affected the Chriſtians, as *Baronius* obſerves 204. §. 12.

Celſus objects theſe clandeſtine meetings to the Chriſtians. See *Origen* contr. Celſ. p. 4.

Tertullian ſays very well *Apol.* 39. *Hæc coitio Chriſtianorum merito ſane illicita, ſi illicitis par, merito damnanda, ſi quis de eâ queritur eo titulo quo de factionibus querela eſt. In cujus perniciem aliquando convenimus? Hoc ſumus congregati, quod et diſperſi: hoc univerſi, quod et ſinguli; neminem lædentes, neminem contriſtantes. Cum probi, cum boni coëunt, cum pii, cum caſti congregantur; non eſt factio dicenda, ſed Curia.*

Martyrs, that ſometimes * a few perſons only were ſeized and put to death, to intimidate the reſt and to give a check to their increaſe, and that the Chriſtians viſited them in priſon, and attended them, when they ſuffered, in great numbers.

AMONGST the bad diſpoſitions which keep men in error and ignorance, there was one which was more eminently peculiar to the *Gentiles* than to the *Jews*, namely a great careleſsneſs and indifference about all religion in general.

Men of rank and fortunes, of wit and abilities, are often found even in Chriſtian countries to be ſurpriſingly ignorant of religion and of every thing that relates to it. Such were many of the Heathen; their thoughts were all fixed upon other things, upon reputation and vain-glory, upon wealth and power, upon luxury and pleaſure, upon buſineſs or learning. They thought, and they had reaſon to think, that the religion of their country was fable and forgery, and

* Arrius Antoninus in Aſiâ cum perſequeretur inſtanter, omnes illius civitatis Chriſtiani ante tribunalia ejus ſe manu factâ obtulerunt; cum ille paucis duci juſſis, reliquis ait, Ὦ δειλοὶ, εἰ θέλετε ἀποθνήσκειν, κρημνὸς ἢ σχοῖνος ἔχετε. *Tertullian* ad Scapulam cap. ult.

a heap

a heap of inconſiſtent lies, which inclined them to ſuppoſe that other religions were no better, and deſerved not to be examined. Hence it came to paſs that even when the Apoſtles preached the Goſpel, and wrought miracles in confirmation of a doctrine every way worthy of God, many *Gentiles* knew little or nothing of it, and would not take the leaſt pains to inform themſelves about it. This appears plainly from ancient hiſtory.

About the time of the Apoſtles, and a little after, flouriſhed * ſome learned men in the heathen world whoſe works are ſtill extant. Theſe men muſt have known that there was a religion called the Chriſtian religion; but their ſilence about it, or the very little that they ſay of the Chriſtians, or the falſe account which they give of them, affords reaſon to ſuſpect that they never deſired to be informed concerning Chriſtianity, and that they underſtood nothing of it.

We read in the *Acts* of the Apoſtles, that *Gallio*, when the *Jews* brought St. *Paul* before him, would not give them a hearing.

* See Le Clerc *de L' Incredulité*. Par. I. ch. 5. whence this remark is borrowed.

He

He thought it unreaſonable that *Paul* ſhould be puniſhed by him becauſe he differed from his countrymen in matters of religion; and he thought right: but whether the doctrine taught by St. *Paul* were true or falſe, that he never conſidered for his own information, and therein he was very careleſs and negligent.

When St. *Paul* pleaded his cauſe before *Feſtus*, his diſcourſe was altogether to the purpoſe; but becauſe it turned upon a religious ſubject, it preſently tired the judge; he would hear no more about it, and he told St. *Paul* that much ſtudy and learning had made him mad.

When St. *Paul* preached to the *Athenians*, he gained few proſelytes. His auditors were men of learning and underſtanding; but they had more pride than knowledge, and more vanity than good ſenſe, and therefore they left him, and neglected the opportunity of receiving further information and inſtruction.

Another prejudice which the *Gentiles* entertained againſt the Goſpel, aroſe from the mean or bad opinion which many of them had

had of the *Jews*. For * a conſiderable time they made little diſtinction between *Jews* and *Chriſtians*, accounting Chriſtianity to be only a particular ſort of *Judaiſm*.

The *Gentiles* † called the Chriſtians atheiſts, becauſe they taught that the Gods of the nations were either nothing at all, or dead men, or Dæmons, becauſe they worſhipped a ſpiritual Deity in a ſpiritual manner, and had no temples and no images.

When the Goſpel began to ſpread in the world, the tares, as Chriſt foretold, ſprang up along with the good ſeed, ſeveral here-

* When therefore *Nerva* forbad to accuſe any perſon of *Judaiſm*, it is probable that Chriſtians came in for a ſhare of the benefit. Dio LXVIII. p. 769. Fabric. *Luc. Evang.* p. 222. The Chriſtian religion in its beginning was perſecuted more by the *Jews* than by the *Romans*. The *Romans* had granted the *Jews* liberty of conſcience, and of obſerving their own laws, not only in *Judæa*, but in other Countries where they were ſettled, as appears in many places of *Joſephus*, as *Ant.* XVI. 10. XIV. 7. and in Philo. Indeed in the time of *Tiberius*, laws were made and executed to check *Jewiſh* and *Ægyptian* ſuperſtitions. *Tacitus* Ann. II. 85. *Suetonius* Tiber. 36. *Seneca* Epiſt. 108. *Joſephus* Ant. XVIII. 4. The *Jews*, probably, ſuffered little from theſe Edicts, and inſinuated themſelves again into the Emperor's favour. The like may be ſaid of the Edict of *Claudius*, mentioned *Acts* xviii. 2. See *Grotius* on *Rom.* xvi. 3. 18. and *Pref.* to *Galat.* and *Whitby* on *Galat.* vi. 12.

† Juſtin M. and other Apologiſts.

tics

tics aroſe, who both taught falſe and wicked doctrines, and led very vitious lives. The ancient * Chriſtians complain frequently that the

* Juſtin. M. See *Tillemont*, CARPOCRATIENS, Hiſt Eccl. Tom. II. Irenæus I. 24. *Edit. Oxon.* obſerves that the *Carpocratians* brought diſgrace on the Chriſtian name by pretending to aſſume it, though they had nothing common with Chriſtians either in opinions, or in morals, or in way of life; and then adds theſe words: *Sed vitam quidem luxurioſam, ſententiam autem impiam ad velamen malitiæ ipſorum nomine abutuntur.*

The paſſage is corrupted. *Grabe* gives it up, as a place which he could not correct, and two emendations of it are propoſed, one by Maſſuet, the editor of *Irenæus*, the other by *Le Clerc*, *Bibl. Choiſ.*. xxv. 237, which I ſhall not tranſcribe, becauſe I think that they give us the ſenſe indeed, but not the words. The likelieſt way to diſcover where the fault lies, is, from this old *Latin* verſion to gueſs at the *Greek*, which ſeems to have been thus; Αλλὰ τὴν μὲν βίον ἄσωτοι, τὴν δὲ γνώμην ἀσεβεῖς, πρὸς (or εἰς) ἐπικάλυμμα τῆς κακίας αὐτῶν, ὀνόματι καταχρῶνται. That is, literally; *ſed vitam quidem* luxurioſi, *ſententiam autem* impii, *ad velamen malitiæ ipſorum, nomine abutuntur. But they, luxurious in their lives, and impious in their doctrines, make a bad uſe of the name* [of Chriſtians] *for a cloke of their wickedneſs.*

Irenæus alludes to Pet. I. II. 16. μὴ ὡς ἐπικάλυμμα ἔχοντες τῆς κακίας τὴν ἐλευθερίαν.

Somebody who thought that the ſubſtantives and adjectives ought to have agreed, changed *luxurioſi* and *impii* into *luxurioſam* and *impiam.*

So II. 37. —— *enunciare profunda et incredibilia myſteria* prurientibus aures. *Irenæus* wrote, κνηθομένοις τὴν ἀκοὴν, from

the *Gentiles* would not * diſtinguiſh between the heretics and the true diſciples of Chriſt, and that they laid the crimes of theſe falſe brethren

from *Tim.* II. IV. 3. as others have obſerved. *Prurientibus aures* is the ſame conſtruction as *vitam luxurioſi*, which greatly confirms my conjecture.

The old tranſlation which we have of *Irenæus* is cloſe and unpolite, and for that reaſon may often diſcover to us the original; as might eaſily be ſhewed in a multitude of places.

* Hence we may ſee why St *Paul* ſays to *Titus*; *A man that is an heretic, after the firſt and ſecond admonition reject; knowing that he that is ſuch is ſubverted, and ſinneth, being condemned of himſelf.* For by the account which ancient Chriſtians have given us of ancient heretics, we find that they were turbulent factious men, who wanted to make themſeves heads of parties, or to ſow diſſention amongſt Chriſtians, that in effect they denied the authority of *Moſes*, of the prophets, and of the Apoſtles, and that they blaſphemed the Creator of the world, that their morals were as bad as their belief, and that they ſurpaſſed the *Pagans* in wickedneſs. Such men could feign themſelves Chriſtians only for bad purpoſes, and it was fit that they ſhould be rejected from Chriſtian ſocieties, eſpecially after they had been admoniſhed once and again. Self-condemned they were, either, firſt, becauſe they muſt have known in their own hearts that they had not the ſame belief with thoſe to whom they had joined themſelves; or, ſecondly, becauſe perhaps, when they had been formerly admoniſhed, they had owned themſelves inexcuſable, and had promiſed a better behaviour. Thus the heretic *Cerdo* acknowledged his fault once and again, and was pardoned and received, till at laſt for repeated offences he either was abſolutely rejected by the Church, or left it of his own accord. See *Euſebius* Eccl. H. IV. 11.

brethren to the charge of Chriſtianity. That the ſingular innocence and piety of the Chriſtians did not ſecure them from malicious and falſe accuſations, appears by the firſt Epiſtle of St. *Peter*, in which he obſerves, that the *Gentiles* ſpake againſt them as * evil doers.

IV. 11. and *Valeſius* there, and *Tillemont*. H. E. Tom. II. *Marcionites*. *Art*. 6.

If *Tertullian* be not miſtaken, *Marcion* and *Valentinus* were excommunicated twice at leaſt, *ſemel et iterum*, and *Marcion* repented at laſt, and would have been received into the Church, but *morte præventus eſt*. Tertullian *de Præſcript*. See *Tillemont*, *Marcionites*, and *Bayle*'s Dict. under that word. See alſo *Tillemont*, E. H. Tom. IV. *Sabelliens*.

There ſeems to be no ſmall difference between the heretics of whom St. *Paul* ſpeaks, and thoſe who, though they fall into errors, yet deſire to know and to believe whatſoever Chriſt and his Apoſtles have taught, and to do what they require, and often are not ſeduced from the right way by any apparent motives of vice or intereſt.

The *Manichæans* were far enough from being heretics of the better ſort. You may ſee an account of them in *Tillemont* H. E. Tom. IV. and the recantation of a *Manichæan*, before he could be admitted into the Church, in *Cotelerius* Patr. Apoſt. *Vol*. I. p. 543. *Ed. Cler*. Yet *Auguſtin*, addreſſing himſelf to them, treats them with great lenity and compaſſion, *contr. Ep. Manich. cap*. 11. *Tom*. VIII. *Ed. Ben. col*. 151. He had been one of them himſelf, and knew how hard it was to ſhake off inveterate errors and prejudices:

Non ignara mali miſeris ſuccurrere diſco.

* See *Whitby* on *Cor*. i. v. 1.

Becauſe

Becauſe the Chriſtians aſſembled together frequently, and that ſecretly and in the night, in time of perſecution, the *Pagans* took occaſion to forge a * baſe calumny, and to affirm that they met in that manner to commit the moſt execrable crimes. This ſtory, though no proof of it was ever produced, found credit amongſt ſome, which indeed is the leſs wonderful, becauſe wicked † men are uſually inclined to think others as bad as themſelves, and the *Gentiles* knew very well that in ſome of their own religious aſſemblies held in the night-time all works of darkneſs had been committed.

But the blameleſs lives, and the ſhining virtues, and the patient ſufferings of the Chriſtians diſſipated by degrees theſe idle reports, and thoſe *Jews* and *Gentiles* who had any candour and ingenuity, thought them to be ‡ ſpightful and ridiculous.

* Juſtin & the Apologiſts. See *Minuc. Fel.* ix. & *Davies.*

† *Ex nonnullis compèri, perſuaſiſſimum habuiſſe eum* (Neronem) *neminem hominem pudicum, aut ullâ corporis parte purum eſſe: verùm pleroſque diſſimulare vitium, et calliditate obtegere.* Sueton. *Neron.* 29.

‡ See Juſtin. *Dial.* p. 155.

The

The * novelty of the Chriſtian religion, and the antiquity of *Paganiſm* was another prejudice of the *Gentiles*. Where was your religion a few years ago? ſaid the *Romans*. We follow our anceſtors, as they, with good ſucceſs, followed theirs. We have experienced the profitableneſs of our ſacred rites and ceremonies; the Gods whom we ſerve have protected and rewarded us, and raiſed our nation from ſmall beginnings to a ſtate of great wealth and power. This looſe and popular argument they urged very gravely, as if it had been a ſufficient defence of their fooliſh ſuperſtitions.

The plainneſs of the Goſpel, and the artleſs ſimplicity with which the Apoſtles and firſt teachers of it diſcourſed, was matter of offence to the *Gentiles*, and truth appeared fooliſhneſs to them, becauſe it was unadorned. They required a better choice of words, a more elegant manner of expreſſion, more vivacity and fancy, more method

* In oppoſition to this, *Euſebius* undertakes to prove that Chriſtianity, in a certain ſenſe, is as old as mankind. E. H. I. 4. The Emperor *Conſtantine* ſays the ſame, which perhaps he had learned from *Euſebius*. See *Euſeb.* vit. Conſtant. II. 57. Juſtin M. had ſaid the ſame, *Apol.* I. 69.

and

and regularity, and more of the art of reaſoning. Philoſophy and oratory, of which they were ſo fond, had ſpoiled them, Philoſophy made them vain and conceited, and taught them to defend ſilly notions with captious and deceitful reaſonings; and what was called eloquence at * that time, though much ſtudied and eſteemed, had degenerated, a bad taſte beginning to prevail, which made them deſpiſe the unaffected ſtyle of the New Teſtament.

They complained of the Goſpel, that † it treated men like children, and required an unreaſonable condeſcenſion and ſubmiſſion from them, commanding them to believe every thing without examination and upon the bare authority of Chriſt and his Apoſtles, and not proving its aſſertions by an argumentative method.

The truths relating to faith and practice, propounded to us in the Goſpel, are indeed

* The time of *Nero*.

† *Origen* contra Celſ. I. p. 8. et VI. *Credo quia impoſſibile eſt*, is often mentioned as a ſally of zeal in ſome old Chriſtian writer. Take it as it ſtands in *Tertullian*; *Crucifixus eſt Dei Filius: Non pudet, quia pudendum eſt. Et mortuus eſt Dei Filius: prorſus credibile eſt, quia ineptum eſt. Et ſepultus reſurrexit: certum eſt, quia impoſſibile eſt.* De Carne Chriſti.

uſually affirmed, and not proved according to the rules of reaſoning. But every ſtudious perſon knows that argumentative proofs of theſe things are ſometimes intricate, obſcure, and above the reach of the bulk of mankind, and that * they may be oppoſed by ingenious men with ſubtle objections which may perplex a perſon of an ordinary capacity. Therefore we may ſuppoſe that one ſent from God to reform and inſtruct the world will have recourſe to ſome plain and ſatisfactory way of eſtabliſhing his authority, which muſt be by working miracles, or by fulfilling ancient prophecies, or by foretelling future events, and that when he has thus prepared men to obey him and truſt in him, he will command as a Law-giver, rather than reaſon as a philoſopher.

The end of religious teaching is to make men wiſe to ſalvation, and if nothing be wanting to accompliſh this end, there is no reaſon to complain that the † ſtyle is

* *Argumenta a Philoſophis producuntur ſpecioſa in utramque partem; nec omnium eſt de eorum vi dijudicare.* Grot. ad *Hebr.* XI. 3.

† See Le Clerc on *Cor.* 2 xi. 6. and Hammond and Le Clerc on *Galat.* xi. 6.

rude

rude and homely, or that the common ways of arguing are not obſerved. He who undertakes to inſtruct others, and has no authority beſides that which he can obtain by raiſing in them a good opinion of his wiſdom and abilities, ſhould omit none of thoſe arts of perſuaſion which ingenious and learned men have cultivated, that he may ſet truth in the faireſt light: but he who comes from God, and to whom God bears teſtimony, has no occaſion for theſe methods of gaining credit. He ought to be heard with reverence and ſubmiſſion, though as St. *Paul* ſays, his bodily preſence be weak, and his ſpeech contemptible. His very imperfections are in one reſpect a recommendation to him, as they tend to prove that his doctrines are not of his own invention.

Beſides, the ſimplicity of the Goſpel ſuits with the ſubject, which is for the moſt part either an hiſtorical narration, or a collection of precepts. Even in * human laws ſtudied eloquence

* *Quæ quidem tradita ſunt breviter, ac nude; nec enim decebat aliter: ut cum Deus ad hominem loqueretur, argumentis aſſereret ſuas voces, tanquam fides ei non haberetur: Sed, ut oportuit, eſt locutus, quaſi rerum omnium maximus judex; cu-*

eloquence is out of place. When God ſpeaks and commands, perſpicuity and brevity are the moſt proper ornaments.

Yet we need not acknowledge that the Scriptures are void of thoſe graces which are eſteemed in human compoſitions *. There is in them beauty and ſublimity where the ſubject requires or admits it; though it ſeems often rather owing to the things of which they treat, than to the choice and diſpoſition of words.

When the Chriſtians appealed to the miracles by which the Goſpel was ſupported,

jus eſt non argumentari, ſed pronunciare verum. Lactantius III. 1.

Simplex et nuda veritas eſt luculentior, quia ſatis ornata per ſe eſt: adeoque ornamentis extrinſecus additis fucata corrumpitur: mendacium verò ſpecie placet alienâ. Idem.

Non probo, quod Platonis legibus adjecta principia ſunt, Legem enim brevem eſſe oportet, quo facilius ab imperitis teneatur, velut emiſſa divinitus vox ſit. Jubeat, non diſputet. Nihil videtur mihi frigidius, nihil ineptius quam lex cum prologo. Mone, dic quid me velis feciſſe: non diſco, ſed pareo. Seneca *Epiſt.* 94.

Βραχεῖς δὲ καὶ σύντομοι παρ' αὐτῷ λόγοι γεγόνασιν, οὐ γὰρ σοφιστὴς ὑπῆρχεν —— *Breves autem et compendioſi fuere* [Chriſti] *ſermones, non enim ſophiſta erat*—Juſtin M. *Apol.* I.

* *Grotius* ſays that St. *Paul* in his Epiſtle to the *Epheſians, rerum ſublimitatem adæquat verbis ſublimioribus quam ulla unquam habuit lingua humana.*

the

the *Gentiles* replied that thoſe miracles were wrought by * magic.

This † was certainly a fooliſh prejudice and a weak objection. If the *Gentiles* meant that the miracles were not real, but only illuſions and falſe appearances, this was confuted by the teſtimony of thouſands who had ſeen thoſe wonderful works, and by the nature of many of thoſe works, which was ſuch that there could be no deceit in them. Or if they meant that there were certain wicked arts and charms by which bad men could compel the Gods to obey them and to aſſiſt them in performing ſupernatural things, this is a notion ‡ which was only fit for poetry. Or laſtly, if they meant that the miracles were wrought by the interpoſition of inferior or evil powers, and not by the aſſiſtance of the ſupreme God, the anſwer to their objection is this: The Chriſtian religion is founded upon natural religion, and

* Celſus, in *Origen*, p. 7. and many others.

† Many *Pagans* were of opinion that the boaſted arts of Magic were folly and deceit. See *Plin.* XXX. 2. Sueton. *Nero.* 51.

‡ See Broukhus. on *Tibull.* I. II. 43. and Grotius *de Ver.* R. C. IV. 8.

ſuppoſes that there is a God, and that he is moſt wiſe, moſt powerful, and * moſt good. Chriſt and the Apoſtles appealed to the God and

* All religion, natural or revealed, and all our better hopes are founded upon the ſuppoſition that God is good; and as this is of all truths the moſt important, ſo there are many clear and ſtrong proofs of it. I ſhall only mention one or two.

1. To ſuppoſe that God is not good, is to ſuppoſe him weaker, and more imperfect, and worſe than the worſt of his creatures.

In men, every evil action may be aſcribed to the temptation of preſent profit or pleaſure, to a power which the mind has of fixing its thoughts entirely upon the object which it deſires, and of overlooking the ill conſequences ariſing from it, and in ſome meaſure to error and miſtake. Thus enticed and deluded a ſinner acts, never chuſing evil for its own ſake. But God, if he were an evil being, would be diſpoſed to evil neither by miſtake, nor temptation, nor paſſion, nor advantage, and would chuſe evil purely as evil.

2. It is the obſervation of a celebrated philoſopher, that πᾶς τὸ οἰκεῖον ἔργον ἀγαπᾷ μᾶλλον ἢ ἀγαπηθείη ἂν ὑπὸ τοῦ ἔργου, ἐμψύχου γενομένου, &c. Ariſtot. *Ethic. Nicom.* IX, that the Artiſt loves the work of his hands better than his work would love him, if it were endued with ſenſe and reaſon; and that the perſon who confers a great benefit upon another, loves him whom he obliges better than the obliged perſon loves him. To which we may add that parents generally love their children more than they are beloved by them. And yet in all theſe inſtances, gratitude, one would think, ſhould make the love of the inferior to be the ſtrongeſt; but experience ſhews that it has not this effect. Theſe obſervations may be reduced to a general truth, that

love

and Father of the univerſe, to the firſt Cauſe of all things, they declared themſelves to be his miniſters, appointed by him to reform mankind, they declared that all other religions were falſe, and that all the Gods of the *Gentiles* were no gods, they declared that they were ſent to extirpate idolatry, and to overturn the dominion of evil ſpirits; and in atteſtation to this they wrought miracles. Here was a ſolemn appeal to the Almighty, and a public challenge to all other deities, and to evil Dæmons; it is not therefore * reaſonable to ſuppoſe either that God would permit men to abuſe his name and authority for bad purpoſes and give ſuch power to impoſtors, or that the Gods of the *Gentiles* and evil ſpirits would not exert their utmoſt power againſt their profeſſed and open enemies, and hinder them from working miracles, if they were able †.

The

love deſcends more than it aſcends; and we may be permitted, I think, to apply this to God and our ſelves, and to ſay that our great and good Creator and Benefactor loves us far better than the moſt dutiful of us love him,

* This will likewiſe anſwer the objection of the *Jews*, that Chriſt wrought miracles by the aſſiſtance of the Devil.

† It has been objected to miracles in general, that God, who is moſt wiſe and unchangeable, cannot alter that

 courſe

— The Chriſtian religion required an open profeſſion before men, which ſeemed alſo unrea-

courſe of nature which with perfect wiſdom he has eſtabliſhed.

1. It would be proper to know what notions the objectors have of the Deity. If by the word *God* they mean the *god* of *Strato* or of *Spinoza*, 'tis very true that ſuch a God cannot alter any thing.

2. When a miracle is wrought, the courſe of nature is altered, but the will and purpoſe of God is not altered, who could not eſtabliſh a courſe which he ſhould not be able to change, and who, when he eſtabliſhed it, knew what changes he would at certain times make in it.

Though miracles ſeem to be the beſt credentials which a perſon can produce, it is poſſible that by being frequently repeated they may loſe ſome of their effect on ſome tempers, and make a fainter impreſſion upon them. May we ſuppoſe this to have been the caſe of ſome careleſs and negligent men who ſaw the miracles of Chriſt and of his Apoſtles?

Chriſt often appeals to his miracles as to a direct and ſufficient proof of his authority; and his Apoſtles ſpeak the ſame language. The *Pagans*, when they were afterwards preſs'd with this argument, to elude the force of it, uſed to ſay that Chriſt and his diſciples wrought miracles by magic art. Some of the Fathers, as *Juſtin* Apol. I. p. 48. and *Irenæus* II. 57. thought that the beſt way of removing this objection was to appeal to the propheſies, and to ſay, that ſince the miracles of Chriſt had been foretold, they muſt have been true miracles, performed by the divine aſſiſtance, and not illuſions or tricks of magic. Others, as *Tertullian*, in a certain place, and *Lactantius* V. 3. went ſo far as to own that the miracles of Chriſt would not have been proved to be true miracles, nor diſtinguiſhed from magical operations, unleſs they had been foretold by the prophets.

Arnobius,

unreaſonable to the learned *Pagans*, who, as we obſerved before, were generally of opinion

Arnobius, in his firſt Book, has reaſoned better on this ſubject, though reaſoning was not his talent, and his judgment was not equal to his learning and vivacity. *Origen* prudently inſiſts upon miracles as proving the truth of Chriſtianity no leſs than prophecy. *Contra Celſ.* p. 5.

The *Gentiles* alſo oppoſed miracles to miracles, and the Fathers would not undertake to affirm that ſuch a thing could not poſſibly be. When the *Pagans* ſaid that ſome by imploring the aid of their Gods had been cured of diſeaſes, the Chriſtians replied that it might be true, for that their Gods were Devils, who, *irrepentes corporibus occultè, ut ſpiritus tenues, morbos fingunt, terrent mentes, membra diſtorquent, ut ad cultum ſui cogant, ut nidore altarium vel hoſtiis pecudum ſaginati, remiſſis, quæ conſtrinxerant, curaſſe videantur.* Minucius Felix. p. 137.

The miracles aſcribed to Chriſt and his Apoſtles recommend themſelves to our belief on the following accounts.

They were wrought by perſons who ſolemnly appealed to God, and who declared that they would perform them.

They were wrought in a public manner.

Before enemies and unbelievers.

In a learned age and civilized countries.

Not with any air of pride, vanity, and oſtentation.

Not for the ſake of lucre, or for worldly advantage.

In confirmation of precepts and doctrines good and uſeful to mankind.

At a time when men wanted neither power nor inclination to expoſe them if they were impoſtures, and were in no danger of being called Atheiſts and Heretics, and of being inſulted by the populace, and perſecuted by the civil Magiſtrate for ridiculing them.

They

opinion that if a man led a virtuous life, it mattered not much what religion he profeſſed, that the ſupreme Being choſe to be worſhipped in various ways, according to the various notions which different people entertained of him, and that every one was obliged for the ſake of public peace to conform to the religion eſtabliſhed in his country.

I ſhall not treat this opinion with contempt: it is perhaps the moſt * ſpecious thing that the *Gentiles* had to ſay for themſelves.

They were various and numerous.

Of a permanent nature, and might be reviewed and re-examined.

Had nothing fantaſtical and cruel in them, but were acts of kindneſs and beneficence.

They had ceaſed for a long time before Chriſt appeared, and therefore would raiſe the attention of men.

They converted multitudes to the faith.

Were atteſted by proper witneſſes.

Foretold by the prophets, and ſuch as the Jews expected from the Meſſias. See *Grot. de Ver.* R. C. IV. 17.

Acknowledged by adverſaries. See *Grot. de Ver.* II. 5. III. 7. and *Le Clerc*'s notes, III. 14. *Cudworth* Intell. Syſt. p. 271. *Huet.* Dem. Ev. Prop. III. 6, 8. *Bayle* Dict. *Hierocles.* Biſhop *Chandler* Def. of Chriſtian. p. 429.

* *Marcilius Ficinus*, in his Treatiſe of the Chriſtian Religion, has in ſome meaſure adopted the ſentiment. He contends, ch. 4. that all religions, how differing ſoever, are ſo far

ſelves. Let it be granted that a *Pagan* was not obliged to enquire diligently after all the religious notions and the various modes of worſhip which obtained up and down in the habitable world, nor to ſpend his time in examining what the philoſophers had to urge for their ſeveral tenets, that it was enough for him to practiſe thoſe virtues which had the general approbation, and to honour the Deity, *more patrio*; if we ſhould make even theſe large conceſſions, yet when a Religion, fair and amiable, juſt and holy, and atteſted by miracles, condeſcended to viſit him and to come to ſeek him; to refuſe her a hearing and to reject her with ſcorn was an immoral behaviour, ſhewed a contempt of truth and of the Deity, and was a ſcandalous indolence in a man, who probably would not have refuſed toil of body and attention of mind, if pleaſure, or profit, or praiſe had called him to it.

To profeſs doctrines which we believe to be falſe, for worldly advantage, for the ſake of quiet, for political reaſons, and out of

far good as they teach men to honour the Deity; and he adds, *forſitan et varietas hujuſmodi, ordinante Deo, decorem quendam parit in univerſo mirabilem.*

ſubmiſſion

ſubmiſſion to the civil Magiſtrate, is a vitious exceſs which nothing can juſtify. Not to be content with the liberty of following our own ſentiments, but rudely to attack what is accounted true and ſacred in the nation where we live, is an extreme on the other ſide. The dictates of prudence and of good manners, and the reverence due to civil ſociety, are things which ought to be carefully conſidered by thoſe whoſe inquiries have led them aſide from the religious opinions commonly received.

Laſtly, the *Gentiles* diſliked Chriſtianity, becauſe it was, in their way of thinking, an unſociable and domineering religion *, which rejected all Gods, except one, and condemned all other religions as impious and deteſtable.

Such were the prejudices of the *Jews* and *Gentiles*, which made ſo many of them unwilling and unfit to receive the Chriſtian religion. But there is reaſon to think that

* When *Dionyſius Alex.* was brought before *Æmilian*, and exhorted by him to adore the Gods, he replied, that Chriſtians worſhipped one God, maker of all things. Why, ſo you may, ſaid *Æmilian*, you may worſhip your own God as much as you will, if you will but worſhip our Gods alſo. *Euſeb.* E. H. VII. 11.

the

the number of unbelievers, amongſt thoſe to whom the Goſpel was firſt preached, was not altogether ſo great, as is commonly imagined *. Beſides thoſe who profeſſed Chriſtianity, and thoſe who rejected and oppoſed it, there were in all probability multitudes between both, neither perfect Chriſtians, nor yet unbelievers; they had a favourable opinion of the Goſpel, but worldly conſiderations made them unwilling to own it. There were many circumſtances which inclined them to think that Chriſtianity was a divine revelation, but there were many inconveniences which attended the open profeſſion of it; and they could not find in themſelves courage enough to bear them, to diſoblige their friends and family, to ruin their fortunes, to loſe their reputation, their liberty, and their life, for the ſake of this new religion. Therefore they were willing to hope that if they endeavoured to obſerve the great precepts of morality, which Chriſt had repreſented as the principal part, the ſum and ſubſtance of religion, if they

* See Epiphanius *Hæres.* 30. c. 9. p. 133. and Petav. *Not.* p. 58. where ſome ſtrange things are related, the truth of which I would neither affirm nor deny.

thought

thought honourably of the Goſpel, if they never ſpake againſt it, if they offered no injury to the Chriſtians, if they did them all the ſervices that they could ſafely perform, they were willing to hope that God would accept this, and that he would excuſe and forgive the reſt.

– The account which we have of thoſe times is very ſhort; but enough is ſaid in the New Teſtament to ſhew that this ſuppoſition is not groundleſs, and that many thought and acted in this manner; for we are there told that ſeveral believed in Chriſt, but durſt not own it, ſome becauſe they loved the praiſe of men, others becauſe they feared the *Jews*, becauſe they would not be put out of the ſynagogue, others becauſe they would not part with their poſſeſſions. *Joſeph* of *Arimathea* is ſaid to have been ſecretly his diſciple *, *Nicodemus* ſeems to have had the ſame diſpoſition; and afterwards *Gamaliel*, and other Phariſees who oppoſed the perſecution and the puniſhment of the Apoſtles, were probably not a little

* Tillemont, *Hiſt. Eccl.* Tom. II. has collected many things concerning *Nicodemus* and *Gamaliel*, principally from Lucian *de Inventione S. Stephani*.

inclined

inclined to Chriſtianity. Thus it was then, and thus it has been ever ſince. Truth has had concealed and timorous friends, who keeping their ſentiments to themſelves, or diſcloſing them only to a few, complied with eſtabliſhed errors and ſuperſtitions, which they diſliked and deſpiſed. They who are at all acquainted with hiſtory know that a * great number of ſuch examples might be produced.

THE oppoſition which the Goſpel experienced from the *Jews* and *Gentiles* aroſe principally from their vices. To this cauſe the ſcriptures aſcribe their unbelief, and obſerve that truth is hidden from thoſe who love darkneſs rather than light, whoſe deeds are evil, who hate to be reformed, whoſe minds are carnal and cannot be ſubject to the law of God, and who have pleaſure in unrighteouſneſs. Of ſuch perſons it is ſaid, that none of them ſhall underſtand.

* Eraſmus *Epiſt.* 583. ſays, *Quid ego potuiſſem opitulari Luthero, ſi me periculi comitem feciſſem, niſi ut pro uno perirent duo?* —— *Multa quidem præclare et docuit et monuit, atque utinam ſua bona malis intolerabilibus non vitiaſſet! Quod ſi omnia pie ſcripſiſſet, non tamen erat animus ob veritatem capite periclitari. Non omnes ad martyrium ſatis habent roboris. Vereor ne ſi quid inciderit tumultûs, Petrum ſim imitaturus.*

Virtue and goodneſs are the health of the ſoul, and vice is a diſeaſe in it. A ſickly and infirm body cannot undergo hard toil, nor can a mind vexed and diſcompoſed with irregular appetites attend to the ſearch after truth, wanting that evenneſs of temper and that vigour which are neceſſary in ſuch enquiries.

The entire oppoſition between the principles of religion and the inclinations of a vitious mind, makes a bad man an improper judge of morality.

A man ſeldom judges right in a cauſe between himſelf and his enemy; prejudice and paſſion incline him to give an unfair ſentence. In ſuch a ſituation is the ſinner when he ſits down to examine the truth of religion; for if religion be indeed what it is commonly ſuppoſed to be, he is a rebel to God and to reaſon, a mere fool, and yet not excuſable upon that account, becauſe his folly is not a natural, but an acquired infirmity. And what can ſuch a one do? He muſt hate the glaſs that ſets his deformity before him, he muſt turn away his eyes and his thoughts from divine truths, and confound the differences between right and wrong;

wrong, that he may find ſome plea for his conduct.

Since God is the Father of all, ſince his mercy is over all his works, ſince he puts it in the power of every perſon to perform all that he requires from him, and ſince men are expoſed to many temptations, it is reaſonable to think that from this ſupreme Being, from this eternal fountain of truth and of all good gifts there iſſues a light which lighteth every one that cometh into the world, and that whoſoever hath a love of things good and praiſe-worthy, and a deſire of acting a virtuous and rational part in his ſtation, has alſo a bleſſing from God, and a ſecret influence upon his heart and underſtanding to guide and improve him.

This bleſſing, as it is given to the good, ſo it is witholden from the wicked. The mind that delights in unrighteouſneſs and prefers it to the divine favour, is left to itſelf, to its injudicious choice, and to the fatal conſequences of that choice. God withdraws himſelf from it, and all is darkneſs and diſorder.

II.

The propagation of the Goſpel.

THE ſwift and ſucceſsful progreſs of the Goſpel, which preached by a few inconſiderable perſons overcame a violent oppoſition, and in a ſhort time ſpread itſelf through the world, is commonly and juſtly ſuppoſed to afford convincing proofs of the truth of the Chriſtian religion; and on that account deſerves to be ſeriouſly and carefully examined.

1. The converſion of the *Gentiles* is a proof of the truth of our religion, if it be conſidered as the completion of ſeveral propheſies.

There are paſſages in the Old Teſtament applied by Chriſtians to our Lord and to his religion, which muſt be confeſſed to have in them ſome obſcurity, and to be attended with ſome difficulty; but there are others clear and expreſs: and of this kind are the

predictions *

predictions * concerning the calling of the *Gentiles*.

There are † many places in the Old Teſtament which declare that in due time there ſhould be a converſion of the *Pagan* world; all nations ſhould turn to the Lord, and worſhip him, and his name ſhould be great amongſt the *Gentiles*, that true religion taught at *Jeruſalem* ſhould prevail over idolatry, that God ſhould ſend forth his Law thence, and rule over the converted nations, guiding and inſtructing them by his holy word, ſhewing them their former errors, and teaching them to lead a new life, and that they who ſhould ſubmit to theſe divine precepts, ſhould alſo lay aſide their mutual animoſities, their hatred and malice, and

* It may be objected; if the calling of the *Gentiles* was ſo clearly foretold, how could it be ſaid in the New Teſtament to have been a myſtery, a myſtery to men and Angels?

That multitudes of *Gentiles* ſhould one day forſake idolatry, and be converted to the worſhip of God, this could ſcarce be unknown, after the prophets had ſaid ſo much about it; but that the *Gentiles* ſhould become God's people without being made proſelytes to *Judaiſm*, and that the ceremonial law ſhould be antiquated, this was not ſo clearly declared as to be underſtood before the event explained it.

† They are collected in *Fabric.* Luc. Evang. p. 7. or *Huet.* Dem. Ev. Prop. IX. cap. 148.

ſhould be remarkable for charity and univerſal love.

Thus ſpeak the prophets concerning this great and happy change, and from the manner in which they ſpeak we may obſerve that this reformation of the *Gentiles* ſhould extend itſelf very far, that many nations were to leave their idolatrous rites, and to ſerve the true God; for nothing leſs can well be underſtood by theſe expreſſions; *All the ends of the earth*, and, *the Gentiles from the riſing of the ſun to his going down.*

We may obſerve that therefore theſe prophecies cannot be ſuppoſed to have been fulfilled before the preaching of the Goſpel. Many *Gentiles* from time to time became proſelytes to the *Jewiſh* Religion, but the number of thoſe proſelytes was not conſiderable enough to deſerve to be deſcribed in ſuch a manner; nor were * whole nations converted to the worſhip of the true God.

* Unleſs, perhaps, the *Samaritans*, and the *Idumæans*. The *Idumæans* embraced *Judaiſm*, being compelled to it by *Hyrcanus*. Joſeph. *Antiq.* XIII. 9. after which they were incorporated into the *Jewiſh* nation, and ceaſed to be a diſtinct people.

Our

Our Lord came into the world, declared himſelf to be the perſon foretold by the prophets who ſhould work this great change, and in whom the *Gentiles* ſhould truſt, and ſent forth his diſciples to make converts in all nations, promiſing them ſucceſs through his aſſiſtance.

Thus we ſee the prophets and our Lord affirming, that idolatry ſhould decline, and true religion be eſtabliſhed in its room; we ſee Chriſtianity propagated by the Apoſtles through the earth, and prevailing over heathen ſuperſtition whereſoever it appeared; we ſee alſo that this was an event which lay out of the reach of human foreſight. The prophets had no reaſon from the appearance of things to believe that ſuch a thing ſhould come to paſs. The worſhip of God was then confined in a manner to the *Jews*; the *Jews* were in danger of being ſome time or other ſubdued by more powerful nations, of being led away into captivity or deſtroyed; they had little intercourſe with other people, and were hated or deſpiſed by many of the *Gentiles*; they often fell into the errors and vices of their neighbours. Upon all theſe accounts it ſeemed more probable that the

time might come when the *Jews* ſhould be cut off, or become idolaters, than that the Heathen ſhould be converted by their means. And when our Lord ſaid that the converſion of the *Gentiles* was at hand, idolatry was as flouriſhing as it had been in the time of the Prophets, ſuperſtition in many places as prevailing, irreligion as general, and vice, at leaſt, as triumphant as ever; the *Romans*, whoſe dominion was then very extenſive, had no high opinion of the *Jews*; yet Chriſt declares that his Apoſtles, though ſeemingly unequal to the undertaking, ſhould ſucceed in it, and reform the corrupted world. The converſion therefore of the *Gentiles*, conſidered as an event which could not be foreſeen by men, which always appeared improbable, and which was * foretold by the

* *Rutilius*, who lived when, to his ſorrow, theſe declarations were fulfilled, ſays;

Atque utinam nunquam Judæa ſubacta fuiſſet
Pompeii bellis, imperioque Titi.
Latius exciſæ peſtis contagia ſerpunt,
Victoreſque ſuos natio victa premit. Itiner. 395.

Seneca had ſaid the ſame of the *Jews*; *victi victoribus leges dederunt*, apud *Auguſt.* De Civ. Dei. VI. 11. But *Rutilius* by his *Jews* means the Chriſtians, whom he durſt not openly abuſe.

prophets

prophets and by Jeſus Chriſt, is a juſt proof that Chriſtianity is a divine revelation, and that the Spirit of God, who ſo long before declared its ſwift and extenſive progreſs, aſſiſted in its eſtabliſhment.

2. The propagation of Chriſtianity is a proof of its truth, becauſe it could never have made its way in the world * without the aſſiſtance of miracles.

Not many years after Chriſt's death we we find great numbers of Chriſtians amongſt the *Jews*, and *Gentiles*. We cannot account for their converſion merely from the love of novelty, from ſuperſtition and enthuſiaſm, from the promiſes and threats contained in the Goſpel, from the purity of its morality, from the good lives and patient ſufferings of the diſciples of Chriſt. We muſt of neceſſity ſuppoſe that miracles were wrought to convince them; and that, for the following reaſons.

The Apoſtles, when they began to preach the Goſpel †, declared that Jeſus Chriſt had done many mighty works, and was riſen

* *Origen* uſes this argument *Contr. Celſ.* p. 30.

† *Mohammed*, prudently enough, always profeſſed that he had no power to work miracles.

from the dead, and had ſent them to convert the world, and had given them a power to work miracles in proof of their miſſion.

By declaring this they were under a neceſſity of working miracles, or of loſing credit amongſt all men. If they wrought no miracles, they confuted themſelves, and could never have made any conſiderable number of diſciples. Since therefore it appears that they pretended to have received the holy Spirit, to ſpeak languages which they had never learned, to perform many miraculous works, and to confer the ſame gifts upon believers, and ſince they prevailed on multitudes of all nations, ranks, ages, and employments to forſake the religions in which they were educated, and to embrace Chriſtianity, the converſion of ſo many proſelytes is a proof that the Apoſtles were indeed endued with power from on high.

St. *Paul* planted and preached the Goſpel at *Corinth*, no obſcure place in ſome remote corner of the world, but a city great and populous, flouriſhing in trade, wealth, and learning, filled with orators and philoſophers, advantageouſly ſituated in *Greece*, and called the light and pride and glory of *Greece*.

To

To theſe *Corinthians* he writes two epiſtles; in the firſt he blames them for ſome faults which they had committed, amongſt which this is particularly mentioned, that they had not always made the beſt and moſt diſcreet uſe of ſpiritual and miraculous gifts; he gives them ſome directions how to exerciſe theſe gifts, and he tells them that charity, that is, the love of our fellow-creatures, and a ſtudy to promote peace, happineſs, and virtue amongſt men, is a more excellent thing than any miraculous power whatſoever, which, by the way, is not the language of an enthuſiaſt.

In his next Epiſtle he commends the reſpect and obedience which they had paid to him; and to convince ſome of them ſtill farther that he deſerved ſuch regard, he reminds them of the miracles which he had wrought amongſt them; *I ought to have been commended of you; for in nothing am I behind the very chiefeſt Apoſtles, though I be nothing, Truly the ſigns of an Apoſtle were wrought among you in all patience, in ſigns, and wonders and mighty deeds.*

Now, if the *Corinthians* had really no ſuch preternatural gifts, and if St. *Paul* had never

ver wrought any miracles amongſt them, it is impoſſible to think that they would have retained any regard to him and to his doctrine. If we think ſo, we muſt ſuppoſe them to have been perſons who lived in a polite country and had not the ſenſe of ſavages, men who had nothing of men beſides the outward ſhape and reſemblance, men of a different kind from any that the world ever ſaw before or ſince; for the moſt enthuſiaſtic ſect would forſake their founder and teacher, if he ſhould write them long and grave epiſtles full of matters of fact which they all knew to be falſe, appealing to miracles which he had never wrought, and directing them to a diſcreet uſe of powers which themſelves never had.

3. To eſtabliſh a new religion even amongſt a few people, or in one ſingle nation, is a thing in itſelf exceedingly difficult. To reform ſome corruptions which may have ſpread in a religion, or to make new regulations in it, is not perhaps ſo hard, when the main and principal parts of that religion are preſerved entire and unſhaken; and yet even this very often cannot be accompliſhed without an extraordinary concurrence

currence of circumſtances, and may be attempted a thouſand times without ſucceſs: But to introduce a new faith, a new way of thinking and acting, and to perſuade many nations to quit the religion in which their anceſtors had lived and died, which had been delivered down to them from time immemorial, to make them forſake and deſpiſe the Deities which they had been accuſtomed to reverence and worſhip, this is a work of ſtill greater difficulty. The prejudices of education and the ſtubborneſs of ſuperſtition ſeem almoſt invincible; and therefore the prophet *Jeremiah*, when he upbraids the people for * neglecting their own religion, and embracing the idolatrous worſhip of their neighbours, obſerves that their behaviour in this was not only baſe and ſtupid, and ungrateful, but new and unparallel'd. *Hath any nation changed their Gods, which*

* I ſay, *neglecting*, rather than *forſaking* and *rejecting*. For the people of *Iſrael* and *Judah*, even in their worſt and moſt idolatrous times did never abſolutely and totally renounce the true God; they worſhipped falſe Gods with and beſides him. But God who would not ſuffer the honour due to him alone to be thus given to others, nor bear a rival, often reſents and repreſents it as no better than apoſtaſy. See the Commentators on *Acts* viii. 42.

yet

yet are no Gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit.

But beſides the reſiſtance which ſuperſtition and the prejudices of education would form, worldly policy could not fail to diſcountenance ſuch an attempt. Changes in religion very often produce changes in the ſtate, and according to the maxims of government, all Princes and Magiſtrates look with an evil eye upon teachers of new doctrines, as upon ſeditious and dangerous perſons.

4. It cannot be denied to be a very ſtrange and ſurpriſing thing that perſons whoſe circumſtances and natural abilities were low and mean, ſhould have ſucceeded in ſo great an undertaking.

It might juſtly be expected of one who ſhould perform ſuch a thing, that he ſhould be a victorious and virtuous prince, who ſhould make himſelf both reverenced and beloved, or a philoſopher remarkable for wiſdom and eloquence, skilled in all the arts of perſuaſion, and formed by nature to inſinuate himſelf into the favour of men. But when perſons of mean extraction, of no human learning, poor, obſcure and friendleſs

friendleſs ſet about it, nothing can follow but ſcorn and diſappointment, unleſs the Divine aſſiſtance be added, which can give ſtrength * to weakneſs and wiſdom to ignorance, and accompliſh its purpoſe by the moſt unpromiſing means.

5. If theſe perſons are not only of mean rank and abilities, but expoſed to ſlander and calumny, and greatly hated by the world, there is ſtill leſs proſpect of ſucceſs. Whoſoever would command the attention, the reſpect and obedience of men, muſt ſtand fair in their opinion, as one who is diſintereſted and who ſeeks their good. He who, though undeſervedly, has loſt his reputation, has loſt many opportunities of doing ſervice to mankind: what comes from him, though commendable and profitable in itſelf, is often ſuſpected, ſlighted, and ill received. I have already ſhewed the great hatred which the generality of the *Jews* and

* *Mirum eſt quam parum acuti eſſent Apoſtolorum nonnulli, ſed datâ operâ tales a Chriſto electos fuiſſe veriſimile eſt; ne dum putabat ſe intelligere quis eſſet, quidve moliretur, quidpiam ingenio ſuo freti, quod Evangelio noceret, aggrederentur; neve poſſent dogmatum, quæ nunciabantur, inventores haberi.* Clericus ad *Joan.* XIV. 7. Vide etiam *Valeſium* ad *Conſtant. Orat.* in *Euſebio*, cap. II. p. 687.

Gentiles

Gentiles bare towards the firſt Chriſtians, and the cauſes and effects of that hatred. Therefore the progreſs of the Goſpel in ſpight of all the lies which had been told concerning it, of all the malice and oppoſition which its profeſſors underwent, can only be aſcribed to the prevailing force of truth and innocence, and to the protection of the Almighty.

6. The eſtabliſhment of Chriſtianity in ſo many nations, and amongſt perſons of all ranks and conditions is an argument in favour of it. Never was there a religion which in this reſpect can be compared with it; for it united the *Jews* and *Gentiles*, that is, perſons in many reſpects the moſt oppoſite, it brought over rich and poor, learned and unlearned, it ſpread through barbarous and ſavage nations, and through the moſt polite and wiſe people, and made its progreſs far and wide.

The Apoſtles began with the *Jews*, and though they could not ſucceed ſo well as to reform the whole nation, though the bulk of them remained incorrigible till deſtruction overtook them, yet the harveſt was by no means contemptible. Twenty years were not

not paſſed from Chriſt's reſurrection, when St. *Paul* coming to *Jeruſalem*, was told by the Diſciples, *Acts* xxi, 20. *Thou ſeeſt, Brother, how many * thouſands of Jews there are which believe.* So mightily did the word of God prevail, even in the capital city of that diſobedient people. In other nations the ſucceſs was greater, and in leſs than forty years after Chriſt, an innumerable multitude of believers were found in moſt parts of the known world.

A religion which can thus recommend itſelf to all tempers and meet with ſo wide an approbation, muſt in all probability be founded on truth, and agreeable to the dictates of reaſon.

7. To convert nations to a ſtrict religion from religions which give great indulgences, and are more ſuitable to depraved inclinations, is a difficult thing. This was the caſe in the propagation of the Goſpel; for the *Greek* and *Roman* Gentiles were not very rigid in their practical notions of morality, and accounted many things to be either harmleſs, or ſmall faults, which the Goſpel

* πόσαι μυριάδες, *how many myriads, ten thouſands,* that is, *how great a number.*

abſolutely

abſolutely condemned; and the *Jews* by their own interpretations had made their religion compliable and accommodated to their paſſions. Now when perſons have been thus educated, and taught to account themſelves virtuous and pious at a cheap rate, and without labour and pains, when they think that they can ſecure to themſelves God's favour here and hereafter, and yet purſue their pleaſures with little reſtraint, they are extremely indiſpoſed towards a religion which requires quite another ſtrictneſs in thought, word, and deed. It appears to them a ſevere, moroſe, and melancholy ſyſtem, a cruel tyranny, and a heavy burden, and there muſt be bright and overbearing evidence to work a thorough reformation in them.

8. The converſion of* very vitious perſons from ſin to righteouſneſs is ſtill more difficult, as experience and reaſon will teach, and is juſtly compared in Scripture to a reſurrection from the dead, and to changes ordinarily or naturally impoſſible. Though Chriſtianity made its principal progreſs a-

* *Origen* urges this argument *Contr. Celſ.* p. 21. and in other places.

mongſt

mongſt well-diſpoſed minds, yet ſeveral were won over to it, who had been remarkably wicked before; and this is a proof that there muſt have been very plain and ſtrong indications of its truth which could overbear all the obſtinate oppoſition of habitual vice.

9. The converſion of multitudes to a * ſuffering ſtate, and to a religion ſo little favourable as it was at that time even to our innocent inclinations, is another argument in behalf of the Goſpel. We all naturally love friends, relations, reputation, liberty, eaſe and quiet, food and raiment, and life. It is reaſonable to ſuppoſe that a man will not part with all theſe upon no evidence that God requires it, and no ſecurity that he will reward it.

The converſion of ſo many, who laid down their lives for Chriſt, in whatſoever way we conſider it, abounds with proofs of the truth of the Goſpel. The courage and conſtancy †, with which the firſt Chriſtians

* *Nullo modo fieri poteſt, ut quiſquam tanti æſtimet æquitatem et fidem, ut ejus conſervandi cauſſâ nullum ſupplicium recuſet, niſi iis rebus aſſenſus ſit, quæ falſæ eſſe non poſſunt.* Cicero *Acad. Quæſt.* II. 8.

† In this, ſays *Chryſoſtom*, the Chriſtians far ſurpaſſed the holy perſons recorded in the Old Teſtament, none of whom is ſaid to have rejoyced in ſuffering for righteouſneſs ſake.

underwent all that human nature ſhuns and fears, is aſtoniſhing. Even women and young people ſuffered with unſhaken reſolution tortures which we cannot read without horror. It is very reaſonable to ſuppoſe that God and his good Spirit enabled them to bear in this manner what they bear for his ſake.

The Chriſtian Church was ſometimes expoſed to perſecutions which naturally and in the ordinary courſe of things muſt have put an end to a falſe religion. I know it has been often ſaid that perſecution is not the way to deſtroy but rather to animate and enlarge a ſect. Ill uſage makes men hate doctrines which tyrannical oppreſſors would force upon them, and fonder of their own opinions than they were before; ill uſage often gives them a religious turn of mind, weans them from a love of the world, and teaches them to place their hopes and confidence in God; and therefore the conſtancy with which a perſon endures ſufferings for his religious ſentiments is not a certain proof that his notions are well-grounded. All this will hold true concerning that leſs violent kind of perſecution which extends only

to

to baniſhment, impriſonment, fines, and the like. But when it proceeds ſo far as to take away life in a cruel manner, bare obſtinacy of temper will ſeldom hold out; a rational conviction and a divine aſſiſtance ſeem neceſſary to ſupport perſons under ſo ſevere a trial.

It has been alſo ſaid that almoſt all ſects have their martyrs; and true it is that men may ſuffer, and have ſuffered for falſe opinions *. But the caſe of the firſt Chriſtians is very different. They ſuffered in behalf of facts. They gave their teſtimony to ſigns and wonders which they had beheld with their own eyes, and on which their faith was founded; in this they perſiſted, and for this they died. But no man, not even an enthuſiaſt, will lay down his life in confirmation of facts which he knows to be falſe.

I have endeavoured to ſhew that from the propagation of the Goſpel the truth of it

* *Ut pro conceptâ opinione mortem quis ſubeat fieri poteſt, quanquam et hoc rarum eſt; at us quis idem faciat pro teſtimonio rei quam falſam eſſe novit, et unde nihil aut ipſi aut aliis boni ſperari poſſit, omnibus ſani judicii hominibus incredibile videtur.* Grotius ad *Matt.* xxviii. 13.

may be proved, as it was foretold by the Prophets, as it abſolutely required the aſſiſtance of miracles, as it forced its way through the greateſt difficulties and oppoſition, and as it was conducted and accompliſhed by perſons naturally unqualified for the undertaking.

In this we may ſee one difference between the methods of human wiſdom and of Divine wiſdom. Human wiſdom ſpares no pains and induſtry in ſeeking out and applying helps and inſtruments proper in the ordinary courſe of things to bring about its deſigns; but Divine wiſdom often chuſes means in all appearance unſuitable, and yet in reality the moſt effectual; which conduct of Providence St. *Paul* thus deſcribes: *God hath choſen the fooliſh things of the world to confound the wiſe, and God hath choſen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty; and baſe things of the world, and things which are deſpiſed hath God choſen, yea and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no fleſh ſhould glory in his preſence.*

This great event our Lord probably had in view when he ſaid to his Diſciples; *He that*

that believeth on me, the works that I do, ſhall he do alſo, and greater works than theſe ſhall he do; becauſe I go unto my Father. We cannot name any miracle wrought by any Apoſtle which in any ſenſe can be ſaid to ſurpaſs the miracles wrought by Chriſt, except the converſion of the *Gentile* world, which, when we conſider the difficulties attending it, and the oppoſition made to it, and the wonderful works wrought to accompliſh it, and the happy effects and conſequences of it, may well be conſidered as a more illuſtrious evidence of God's power, wiſdom, and goodneſs, than even our Saviour's miracles of caſting out devils, healing the ſick, and raiſing the dead.

I have taken notice of the cauſes, which in the ordinary courſe of things ſhould have ſtopped the progreſs of Chriſtianity. If every thing had been againſt it, and nothing for it, it muſt have periſhed at its birth. Let us therefore conſider, on the other hand, what there was to help its progreſs, and to recommend it to mankind; and here we ſhall find at the ſame time new proofs of its divine original, ſince every

thing that contributed to its eſtabliſhment, is a teſtimony of its excellence.

1. Firſt then the propheſies concerning the calling of the *Gentiles*, and the * miracles wrought by the Chriſtians, were a ſufficient recommendation of the Goſpel to all ſerious, inquiſitive, and ingenuous minds. But theſe evidences have been already conſidered.

2. Another thing which might reconcile the learned *Gentiles* to Chriſtianity was a reſemblance and conformity, greater or leſs, between the theological doctrines of revealed religion, and the † opinions of ſome or other of the wiſer *Gentiles* in various ages and

* We have *Origen*'s teſtimony, that many, beſides St. *Paul* and *Cornelius*, were called to Chriſtianity in a miraculous manner. *Contr. Celſ.* p. 35. And *Grotius* quotes it, and approves it on *Luke* xiv. 23. Tertullian *De Anim.* 47. ſays the ſame; as alſo *Euſebius*, *Jerom*, and *Sozomen*. See *Euſebius* VI. 5.

† Namely, one ſupreme God.

The Platonic Trinity, of which the firſt is τὸ Ἕν, ἢ Ἀγαθὸν, One, moſt Simple, and abſolutely Good and Perfect; the next Νοῦς or Λόγος, Wiſdom, Reaſon, the Word, who is the Δημιουργὸς, the maker of all; thirdly Ψυχὴ, the univerſal Soul or Spirit, pervading all things.

Seneca's words, though they ſeem only to expreſs ſo many names, or ways of conſidering God, are ſingular and remarkable

and places, amongſt whom are found evident traces of the doctrines of one God and Father of all, of a Mediator, of the original beauty and perfection of the creation, of the fall of men and Angels, of a reſtitution to a happier ſtate, of the conflagration of the world, of the ſouls immortality, of future rewards and puniſhments.

markable. —— *Quiſquis formator univerſi fuit, ſive ille* Deus *eſt potens omnium, ſive incorporalis* Ratio, *ingentium operum artifex, ſive divinus* Spiritus, *per omnia, maxima, minima, æquali intentione diffuſus.*——Indeed he adds, *ſive Fatum*, &c. Conſol. ad Helv. 8.

The doctrine of a Mediator, ſon of the Deity, one or more, who conveyed bleſſings from God to men, and recommended men to the favour of God.

The doctrine of an evil Dæmon, who though very powerful, was inferior to the good Deity, and ſhould be aboliſhed by him.

The doctrine of three ſtates of the world, that all was created fair and good in its kind, that there has been a fall and depravation of this original goodneſs, and that there ſhall be a reſtitution of things to their ancient beauty and perfection.

Proofs of theſe tenets may be found in Cudworth *Intell. Syſt.* Hyde *Relig. Vet. Perſ.* Ramſay's *Diſſert.* ſubjoined to the *Travels of Cyrus.* Vitringa *in Iſai.* 45. p. 496. Joſ. Mede, B. III. Ch. III. p. 626. and *Comment.* in *Apocal.* p. 475. Prideaux *Lett. to the Deiſts.* Sect. 7. Fabricius *De Ver. Rel. Chriſt.* C. VIII. p. 312. Huet. *Alnet. Quæſt.* p. 290, &c. not to mention many others.

3. Chriſtianity had likewiſe this advantage, that its precepts were for the moſt part agreeable to the doctrines which ſome of the beſt *Pagan* authors had delivered.

The *Gentiles*, though in their ſearches after wiſdom and knowledge they had fallen into many errors, yet had likewiſe diſcovered many excellent truths; and if a judicious collection * had been made of the uſeful doctrines which ſome or other of them in

* The conformity of Philoſophy and Chriſtianity in many things has been ſhewed by ſeveral of the ancient Fathers, particularly by *Clemens Alexandrinus*, and by *Euſebius* in *Præp. Evang.* I ſhall only quote Lactantius; *Docemus nullam ſectam fuiſſe tam deviam, nec philoſophorum quenquam tam inanem, qui non videret aliquid ex vero.——Quod ſi extitiſſet, aliquis, qui veritatem ſparſam per ſingulos, per ſectaſque diffuſam colligeret in unum, ac redigeret in corpus, is profecto non diſſentiret a nobis.* Inſt. VII. 7. See Grotius *de Ver. C. R.* IV. 12. The Philoſophers all prepared the way, though undeſignedly, for the Goſpel, by expoſing and overturning the popular and fabulous religions. Epicureiſm itſelf, though of all ſchemes the remoteſt from Chriſtianity, yet in ſome things agreed with it, as;

1. In recommending temperance and ſobriety. See *Lucretius* II. 14. &c. *Juvenal*;

Quantum, Epicure, tibi parvis ſuffecit in hortis.

Seneca does juſtice to *Epicurus* on this head many times.

2. In ſuppoſing that this world would one day periſh. *Lucret.* II. 1144.

3. In

in various times and places had taught, a ſyſtem of morality might have been drawn up which would bear no ſmall reſemblance to the dictates of the Goſpel. And this doubtleſs was a great advantage to Chriſtianity, that the New Teſtament alone ſhould contain in it every valuable truth which dif-

3. In deſpiſing and expoſing the poëtical, popular, and civil religion of the *Gentiles*. The impoſtor *Alexander*, ſays *Lucian*, was upon good terms with the Platonics, Stoics, and Pythagoreans, but mortally hated the Epicureans and Chriſtians, and therefore gave out that *Pontus* ſwarmed with atheiſts and Chriſtians, and that the people ought to drive them away with ſtones, if they expected to have the God propitious. And when he celebrated initiations of his own contrivance, *on the firſt day of the ceremonies, proclamation was made: If any Atheiſt, Chriſtian, or Epicurean, comes to pry into the ſacred rites, let him be gone. But ye who believe the God, approach, and be initiated, and happineſs attend you! Then they cleared the place; and he began, ſaying, Out with the Chriſtians; to which all the multitude anſwered, Out with the Epicureans.* Καὶ ἐν μὲν τῇ πρώτῃ, παῤῥησία ἦν λοιδυρεῖν· εἴ τις ἄθεος, ἢ Χριστιανὸς, ἢ Ἐπικούρειος, ἥκοι κατάσκοπος τῶν ὀργίων, φευγέτω· οἱ δὲ πιστεύοντες τῷ θεῷ, τελεσθῶσαν τύχῃ τῇ ἀγαθῇ. Εἶτ' εὐθὺς ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐξέλασις ἐγίγνετο· καὶ ὁ μὲν ἤρχετο, λέγων, Ἔξω Χριστιανούς. τὸ δὲ πλῆθος ἅπαν ἐπεφθέγγετο, Ἔξω Ἐπικουρείους. Lucian *Alex.*

The reaſons for which this Juggler turned out the Epicureans and Chriſtians are plain enough: but *Dodwell* ſuppoſes that *Alexander* was afraid leſt the Chriſtians ſhould break the ſpell, and drive away the evil ſpirit. *Diſſ. Cypr.* XI. 30.

ferent

ferent perſons at different times by a ſober uſe of reaſon had diſcovered, without the errors which they had blended with thoſe truths.

4. At the time when * the Goſpel was firſt preached, there was a great number of *Gentiles*, who were proſelytes to the *Jewiſh* Religion ſo far, that they worſhipped the one God of *Iſrael*, and renounced the follies and vices of *Paganiſm*. Moſt of theſe perſons were well-diſpoſed to receive the Goſpel, and were converted by the Apoſtles. They of whom our Saviour ſays, that the *Phariſees* made them twofold more the children of hell than themſelves, ſeem to have been the other ſort of proſelytes, who received circumciſion and the whole law of *Moſes*.

5. Another cauſe of the progreſs of Chriſtianity was the importance of the truths contained in the Goſpel. The Apoſtles, when they had prepared men to believe and obey them, by giving ſufficient proofs of their miſſion, propoſed to them the Chriſtian religion as the only way by which they could hope to avoid extreme miſery in the world to come, and to obtain everlaſting

* See *Mede* B. I. *Diſc.* 3.

happineſs.

happineſs. A day of judgment, when every one ſhould receive according to his works, a reſurrection to eternal life or condemnation, were the motives by which they preſſed repentance and obedience.

6. Another thing which contributed to the propagation of the Goſpel was the amiable character of the Apoſtles and of the Chriſtians of that age. The diſciples of the Lord were examples of fervent zeal for the welfare of mankind, of an inoffenſive behaviour, of diſintereſtedneſs and ſelf-denial, of indefatigable induſtry, of the moſt extenſive charity, of patience and courage and conſtancy, and of a regular practice of all that they taught. The firſt Chriſtians * reſembled their teachers in theſe good qualities, and it was no ſmall advantage to them in their apologies for themſelves and for their religion to be able to appeal boldly to their innocence and integrity.

That we may have a right ſenſe of this, we ſhould conſider what it was to be a

* However we ſhould not carry the notion of the ſanctity of the old Chriſtians too high; that they had their defects appears plainly from the Epiſtles of the Apoſtles and of *Clemens Romanus*.

Chriſtian

Chriſtian in thoſe days, leſt we be deceived by the vulgar uſe of the word, and by the notion which we at preſent entertain about it.

To be a good Chriſtian at that time was to be an example of well-tried virtue, of true wiſdom, and of conſummate fortitude; for he ſurely deſerves the name of a great and a good man, who ſerves God, and is a friend to mankind, and receives the moſt ungrateful returns from the world, and endures them with a calm and compoſed mind,* who dares look ſcorn and infamy and death in the face, who can ſtand forth unmoved and patiently bear to be derided as a fool and an ideot, to be pointed out for a madman and an enthuſiaſt, to be reviled as an atheiſt and an enemy to all righteouſneſs, to be puniſhed as a robber and a murderer. He who can paſs through theſe trials is a conqueror indeed, and what the world calls courage, ſcarce deſerves that name when compared to this behaviour.

* *Quem neque pauperies, neque mors, neque vincula terrent;*
Reſponſare cupidinibus, contemnere honores
Fortis, &c. Horat.

This

This conſtant and pious greatneſs of ſoul under the moſt afflicting circumſtances was one of the means * by which Chriſtianity was propagated. The example of a perſon who is humble and reſolute in adverſity, who places his whole faith in God, when God ſeems to forſake him; this example preaches the Goſpel more effectually than the moſt ingenious and learned diſcourſe, and inclines others to think and to ſay, ſurely that faith muſt be rational and well-grounded which produces ſuch noble effects, and that religion muſt have God for its author which can ſupport the mind under all difficulties and preſſures.

7. Laſtly, the Goſpel preſented to men a diſpenſation of ſuch awful and impartial juſtice ſo admirably tempered with goodneſs, clemency and forbearance, that it appeared highly worthy of him from whom it proceeded, and as ſuitable to thoſe to whom it was offered. It required a regular and univerſal regard to all righteouſneſs, but it

* *Duris ut ilex tonſa bipennibus,*
Nigræ feraci frondis in Algido,
Per damna, per cædes ab ipſo
Ducit opes animumque ferro. Horat.

offered

offered an aſſiſtance which ſhould add ſtrength to human weakneſs: it gave no hopes to ſtubborn and habitual offenders; but it left room for repentance and amendment, and excluded none who by a change from vice to goodneſs would make themſelves objects of the Divine mercy.

III. *The*

III.

The kingdom of Chriſt.

AMongſt the offices which our Saviour ſuſtained, the office of King is firſt in dignity. Under this character he is deſcribed by the Angel who was ſent to his mother; under this character he is foretold by the prophets.

The firſt prediction of Chriſt's regal office is the promiſe which God made to *David*, that his houſe, and his throne, his ſeed and his kingdom ſhould be eſtabliſhed for ever, as the days of heaven, as long as the ſun and moon ſhould continue; of which promiſe mention is often made in the hiſtorical books of the Old Teſtament and in the *Pſalms*. Hence the *Jews* concluded that from *David* ſhould ariſe the Meſſias.

The Prophets frequently ſpeak of this promiſed perſon, as of a king, and *David* *

* Pſalm ii. xlv. cx.

often

often deſcribes the child who ſhould deſcend from him, as a great and mighty Prince.

I propoſe to conſider,

I. When our Lord's kingdom began:

II. What are the particular characters of his kingdom, which ſhould diſtinguiſh it from all other empires.

I. There is a kingdom which our Lord had from the beginning, as he was the Word of God, and the Son of God, and the perſon by whom God made all things. But the kingdom of which we are now ſpeaking, is that kingdom which he was to receive when he became man, and which was foretold by the prophets, and concerning which the Angel thus ſpeaks in St. *Luke*'s Goſpel; *He ſhall be great, and ſhall be called the Son of the Higheſt, and the Lord God ſhall give unto him the throne of his father David, and he ſhall reign over the houſe of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there ſhall be no end.* And the time when it began is to be firſt conſidered.

The kingdom of Chriſt is commonly accounted to have begun when he aſcended into

into heaven, and ſent down the holy Ghoſt. Nevertheleſs our Lord may be truly ſaid to have been born a king, and his kingdom may commence with his nativity, though he did not exert many acts of royal authority, or ſuffer his reign to be manifeſt before his aſcenſion.

For ſoon after his birth the Wiſe men were guided by a heavenly light, and came and offered him preſents, and paid him that worſhip which uſed to be paid to Eaſtern kings, and acknowledged him as the great king who was to ariſe in *Judæa*.

After this he continued in obſcurity till he entered into his miniſtry, during which he gave ſome intimations of his royal dignity, and permitted himſelf to be acknowledged as a king, but ſparingly and ſecretly, that he might not offend the civil magiſtrate; for,

Firſt, he took upon him the name of *Meſſias* or *Chriſt*, and ſuffered it to be given to him. Now Meſſias, or Chriſt, in the opinion of all the *Jews*, was the name of that great king foretold by the prophets; and conſequently all who believed him to be the Meſſias owned him for their king. *Na-*

thanael ſays to him; *Thou art the Son of God, thou art the king of Iſrael:* and Chriſt accepts the acknowledgment. Afterwards, when he was entering into *Jeruſalem*, all his diſciples praiſed God, and ſaid; *Bleſſed be the king that cometh in the name of the Lord.* At which the Phariſees were offended, and ſaid to him; *Maſter, rebuke thy diſciples. But he anſwered: If theſe ſhould hold their peace, the ſtones would immediately cry out.*

Secondly, he ſuffered himſelf to be called, *the Lord*, which implies as much.

Thirdly, it is the office of a king to give laws, and this office he executed.

Fourthly, when Pilate asked him whether he was a king, Chriſt owned to him that he * was; but to ſatisfy him, he told him farther, that his kingdom was not like the kingdoms of this world, and was not oppoſite to the *Roman*, or to any other hu-

* *Cum vero Jeſus hic regem ſe fateatur, negari mihi videtur non poſſe regnum ejus aliquo modo inchoatum eſſe cum veritatem cœpit docere: nam ita ipſe apud Joannem regnum interpretatur. Neque obſtat quod paſſim regni ejus initium duci videtur ab evectione in cœlum: id enim de plenâ regni poſſeſſione intelligendum eſt.* —— *Certe poteſtas remittendi peccata, quam Jeſus vitam mortalem agens exercuit, ad regnum pertinebat, ut et liberrima illa miraculorum pro arbitrio diſpenſandorum poteſtas.* Grotius ad *Mat.* xxvii. 11.

man

man government. This is that good confeſſion which, as St. *Paul* obſerves, he witneſſed before *Pontius Pilate*.

Thus did Chriſt's kingdom begin with his birth, but whilſt he dwelt here below it was ſmall and obſcure, and eſcaped the notice of the world. His ſubjects were few, weak in faith, and not confirmed in their obedience, and they forſook him and hid themſelves when he was in danger. His kingdom was like a grain of muſtard ſeed; but ſtill it was a kingdom. And therefore, being asked by the *Phariſees* when the kingdom of God ſhould come, he anſwered; *The kingdom of God cometh not with obſervation, neither ſhall they ſay, Lo here, or, Lo there, for the kingdom of God is within you.* Which is as if he had ſaid; My kingdom does not make its firſt appearance, and is not uſhered in with royal pomp and ſplendor, like the *Aſſyrian*, *Ægyptian*, *Babylolonian*, *Græcian*, or *Roman*. It comes ſilently and ſteals upon the world unobſerved; for indeed it is already begun, and you know it not.

Hitherto we have ſeen our Saviour's kingdom in its infancy; but as ſoon as he was

riſen from the dead, and at his aſcenſion, it began to be very viſible and remarkable. Then as the lightning which ſhineth from one ſide of heaven to the other, ſo was the Son of man in that day. His glory and his Goſpel were propagated through the world with amazing irreſiſtible ſwiftneſs. And therefore the Apoſtles repreſent him as then inveſted with royal power, and beginning his reign, becauſe it then began to be conſpicuous. Thus St. *Peter* tells the *Jews* that God had raiſed up *Jeſus* from the dead to ſet him on the throne of his father *David*, that he had ſet him at his own right hand and made him Lord of all, and Chriſt, or Meſſias, or the anointed king of *Iſrael*, that he had exalted him to his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour. And our Lord ſays of himſelf, after his reſurrection, that all power was given to him in heaven and in earth. In the Revelation he is called, *King of kings, and Lord of lords.* This royal dignity, this high exaltation, this name above every name, to which Angels and men ſhould bow, is repreſented by St. *Paul* as a reward which God conferred upon Chriſt for his humiliation and ſufferings. If we there-

therefore conſider Chriſt as man, it was a new dignity which he had not before his aſcenſion, or rather, which he had in a more imperfect degree; but as he was the eternal Son of God, he had, as he ſays of himſelf, * glory with the Father before the world was.

II. The ſecond thing which I propoſed, was to examine what are the particular characters of Chriſt's kingdom which diſtinguiſh it from all other kingdoms, or, which amounts to the ſame, the peculiar characters of Chriſt, as he is a king.

1. Chriſt was not a temporal prince; his kingdom was not of this world; it differed in many reſpects from earthly kingdoms. It was not eſtabliſhed like them either by human policy, or by human force, but by a few poor, obſcure, helpleſs, illiterate perſons. It experienced ſuch an oppoſition as would infallibly deſtroy any earthly dominion: Kings ſtood up and rulers took counſel together againſt it,

* Joh. xvii. 5. *Glorify thou me*, &c. that is, ſays *Theophylact*, τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην μου φύσιν ἄγαγε εἰς τὴν δόξαν ἣν εἶχον παρὰ σοὶ ἐγὼ λόγῳ· which is preferable to the interpretation given by *Grotius*. But *Grotius* ſpeaks otherwiſe in his *Ordin. Holland. Piet.* prope init.

and the wiſe and the learned joined with them, and for three hundred years, from time to time all kind of ſubtilty and violence and inhumanity was employed to overturn it; but the more it was perſecuted, the more it flouriſhed, and at laſt prevailed over all its enemies.

— It was a kingdom erected in the hearts and over the conſciences of men. It was a kingdom which conſiſted of ſubjects who entered into it and continued in it voluntarily, and were neither encouraged nor kept in awe by thoſe methods which are moſt effectual in civil ſociety. Temporal recompenſes and temporal chaſtiſements were ſparingly adminiſter'd in it. At its firſt eſtabliſhment and for a conſiderable time after, the loſs of friends and of fortunes and of life was the preſent proſpect for thoſe who ſhould enter into it, and the recompenſe was eternal happineſs after death.

— 2. Chriſt's kingdom was to extend itſelf over all nations, and to differ in this from human empires which had indeed been called univerſal monarchies, and whoſe kings and emperors had ſtiled themſelves Lords of the world, but had no juſt pretenſions

ſions to ſuch titles. Chriſt declares that all power was given to him in heaven and earth, that all things were delivered to him of his Father; and St. *Paul*, that at his name all ſhould bow in heaven and earth. His kingdom then is univerſal, and all creatures are, or ought to be his ſubjects, all the inhabitants of heaven, and all mankind. Therefore they who ſerve and obey him are to be conſidered as his dutiful ſubjects, they to whom he is preached, and who reject his Goſpel, are his rebellious ſubjects, they who receive his religion but live not according to it, are his diſobedient and ſinful ſubjects, and they who never had opportunities of hearing and learning it are to be conſidered as his ignorant ſubjects, who know not their true Lord and maſter; for he has a right to rule over them all, and in that ſenſe is univerſal King.

But the number of thoſe who ſhould profeſs themſelves to be, and who ſhould indeed be his ſervants, is repreſented by the Prophets as exceeding great.

All nations, ſay the Prophets, *and many people ſhall go and ſay, Let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the houſe of the God*

of Jacob, and he will teach us his ways and we will walk in his paths.——*There ſhall be a root of Jeſſe, to it ſhall the Gentiles ſeek.*——*All the ends of the world ſhall remember and turn unto the Lord, and the kindreds of the nations ſhall worſhip before thee.*—*All nations whom thou haſt made ſhall come and worſhip before thee, O Lord, and ſhall glorify thy name.*—*Behold my ſervant*—*in whom my ſoul delighteth*—*he ſhall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.*——*I will give thee for a covenant to the people, for a light to the Gentiles. It is a light thing that thou ſhouldſt be my ſervant to raiſe up the tribes of Jacob, and to reſtore the preſerved of Iſrael: I will alſo give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayſt be my ſalvation unto the ends of the earth.*——*The earth ſhall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the Sea.*—*From the riſing of the ſun even unto the going down of the ſame my name ſhall be great among the Gentiles, and in every place incenſe ſhall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering; for my name ſhall be great among the Heathen, ſaith the Lord of hoſts.*—*I ſaw,* ſays Daniel, *and behold one like the ſon of man,*—*and there was given unto him dominion*

and

and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages ſhould ſerve him: his dominion is an everlaſting dominion which ſhall not paſs away, and his kingdom that which ſhall not be deſtroyed.

Thus it was foretold of Chriſt, in general, that he ſhould rule over all things; in particular, that he ſhould have the throne of *David*, and rule over the houſe of *Jacob*.

3. Chriſt is called *a righteous branch*, and *the Lord our righteouſneſs*; he is alſo called *the Prince of peace*. His kingdom was to be a kingdom of righteouſneſs; piety and virtue were to flouriſh in his dominions; his kingdom was to be a kingdom of peace, as it ſhould be eſtabliſhed without war and bloodſhed, and as his ſubjects ſhould be quiet and peaceable. *Iſaiah* ſays of the converted multitudes; *they ſhall beat their ſwords into plow-ſhares, and their ſpears into pruning-hooks: nation ſhall not lift up ſword againſt nation, neither ſhall they learn war any more.*

And again, deſcribing the amazing change that ſhould be wrought in ſavage and cruel nations, he compares them to the wildeſt and fierceſt beaſts putting off their nature

and

and becoming tame and gentle. *The wolf ſhall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard ſhall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion, and the fatling together, and a little child ſhall feed them; and the cow and the bear ſhall feed, their young ones ſhall lie down together, and the lion ſhall eat ſtraw like the ox; and the ſucking child ſhall play on the hole of the aſp.—They ſhall not hurt nor deſtroy in all my holy mountain.*

Concerning the completion of theſe propheſies there ariſes a difficulty, when we compare the predictions with the event. The objections I ſhall endeavour to ſtate fairly, though in few words, and then proceed to the anſwer, to the ſolution of them.

The Prophets, as we have ſeen, deſcribe the kingdom of Chriſt, firſt as extending in ſome ſenſe over all people, and ſpreading itſelf through the earth; ſecondly, as comprehending in it the *Jewiſh* nation; and thirdly as a kingdom of concord and righteouſneſs. But, firſt, there have always been, and there are now many great nations who make no part of the kingdom of Chriſt; ſecondly, the *Jews* continue in their unbelief, and our Lord has no ſubjects amongſt them;

them; thirdly, there have been continual wars, perſecutions, religious controverſies, and wickedneſs in the Chriſtian world.

To all which it may be anſwered;

It is reaſonable to ſuppoſe that the holy Spirit of God, who inſpired the Prophets, gave them a view of the kingdom of Chriſt, in general, from its eſtabliſhment to the end of the world; and that they were led to repreſent it in their propheſies as it ſhould be in its full luſtre, in its higheſt degree of beauty and perfection; it is no leſs reaſonable to ſuppoſe that the time is not yet arrived when his kingdom ſhall be in its moſt glorious ſtate. It is therefore not to be accounted ſtrange if the preſent condition of Chriſtianity falls ſhort of thoſe great and magnificent repreſentations contained in the propheſies.

But though theſe predictions have not yet received their entire completion, yet a great part of them has been remarkably and illuſtriouſly fulfilled.

Thus, though all nations of the earth have not embraced the Goſpel, which event ſome propheſies, interpreted literally, promiſe and declare, yet its progreſs has been

as

as wide as its beginnings were ſmall, ſo that according to the common way of ſpeaking, we may juſtly ſay that its ſound has gone out to the ends of the world, and that it has overſpread the earth.

The firſt partial accompliſhment of the propheſies concerning the propagation of the Goſpel began in the days of the Apoſtles, when multitudes of *Jews* and *Gentiles* were converted in *Judæa* and its neighbourhood, in *Greece*, in the leſſer *Aſia*, in *Italy*, when amongſt them there were ſome who had been enemies to Chriſt and to his church, and ſome of eminent rank and abilites, when theſe perſons laying aſide their mutual hatred and contempt, their ſuperſtitions and idolatries, their vices and debaucheries, lived in peace and friendſhip, and were illuſtrious examples of piety and virtue.

Chriſtianity, thus eſtabliſhed, continually increaſed, and multitudes of believers were added amongſt the *Ægyptians*, *Aſſyrians*, *Arabians*, *Greeks*, *Italians*, *Spaniards*, *Gauls*, and other people.

The ſecond accompliſhment began in the days of *Conſtantine*, when the *Roman* Emperors

perors became Chriſtian, and the empire by degrees followed their example.

The third began ſome time after, when many nations which were ignorant, barbarous and fierce, and might well be deſcribed by the Prophets as lions, bears, and wolves, received the Goſpel, ſome ſooner and ſome later, * as the *Goths*, the *Vandals*, the *Germans*, the *Engliſh*, the *Scots*, the *Saxons*, the *Bohemians*, the *Hungarians*, the *Poles*, the *Muſcovites*, and many other people.

Secondly; the objection that our Saviour ſhould have at preſent no ſubjects amongſt the *Jews*, may perhaps be thus removed.

By the miniſtry of the Apoſtles a great multitude of *Jews* were converted to the faith, not only at *Jeruſalem* and in *Palæſtine*, but in all thoſe various and remote regions where the twelve tribes were ſcattered abroad. Theſe *Jews* retained a great regard for the Law, and obſerved it along with the Goſpel for a conſiderable time; but after the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, and the calamities which befel the nation, firſt un-

* *Franci, Germani, Alemanni, Saxones, Vandali, Hungari, Bohæmi, Poloni, Gothi, Angli, Friſii, Longobardi, Bulgari, Moſci,* &c.

der

der *Veſpaſian*, and afterwards under *Adrian*, theſe *Jewiſh* Chriſtians, partly through diſuſe of the ceremonial Law, and partly through marriages with Chriſtians of *Gentile* extraction, may be ſuppoſed to have been ſo mixed with them, that they loſt all national diſtinction; which to them was indeed no loſs at all, but a deſirable thing. Their poſterity therefore are now * ſubjects to Chriſt, though under the common denomination of Chriſtians.

Thirdly, as to the wars and vices of Chriſtians, theſe anſwers may be made.

It is extremely evident that the precepts of Chriſtianity are calculated to promote peace and virtue. Therefore, according to the common ſtyle of Scripture, the Goſpel may be ſaid to have brought peace and virtue, † becauſe it has brought every thing that is neceſſary to produce it.

* *Grotius* on *Rev.* xi. 15. obſerves that Chriſt may be ſaid to rule over the *Jews* for ever, becauſe *ſemper erit in Judæâ Chriſtiana religio. Quod verum fuit primùm ſub Paganis Imperatoribus, multò magìs ſub Chriſtianis, ſed et ſub Sarracenis et Turcis in hunc diem.* I take the ſolution which I have propoſed to be more probable.

† Vid. *Grot.* de Jure B. I. II. § 8.

The

The ſtyle of the prophets is poëtical, lively, and lofty; and therefore their magnificent deſcriptions of the happineſs and piety which ſhould adorn the reign of the Meſſias may be reſtrained and underſtood in a ſenſe ſomewhat lower than the words uſually import.

The doctrines of the Goſpel have undoubtedly produced at all times good effects in the minds of many Chriſtians: they are peaceable and charitable, and ready to ſhew kindneſs to all men, in their private capacities, as far as the laws and public intereſts of their reſpective kingdoms and ſocieties permit.

Chriſtianity has made a happy alteration in thoſe nations who have embraced it, nor have they that fierceneſs and barbarity which they had when they were *Pagan*.

The * benefits which Chriſtianity has brought to thoſe nations which have received it, are in many reſpects greater than we uſually imagine.

In the *Gentile* world men were looſe and unſettled in their principles; hence it came to paſs that impurities of all ſorts were ſcarce

* Euſebius *Præp. Evang.* I. 4.

reckoned

reckoned faults amongſt them, that they made no ſcruple of * expoſing infants, that they were cruel and inhuman towards † ſlaves and priſoners, and that they had public ſhews, in which men were obliged

* See Gerard. Noodt *Julius Paulus, ſive de Partus Expoſitione*, &c.

† The *Romans*, who kept a multitude of ſlaves, often neglected them moſt inhumanly when they were ſick, turned them out of doors, and ſent them to the Iſland in the *Tiber*, where they left them to be cured by the God *Æſculapius* who had a temple there. The Emperor *Claudius* decreed that the ſlaves thus turned out ſhould have their liberty if they recovered. And becauſe ſome maſters were ſo cruel that they killed them when they were ſick, he ordered that they who did ſo ſhould be puniſhed as murderers. *Sueton.* Claud. 25. *Dio* LX. p. 685. *Adrian* wiſely took away the power of life and death, which maſters exerciſed over them. *Adr.* in *Hiſt. Aug. Script.* c. 18. p. 169.

The condition of ſlaves has ever been deplorable, and far worſe than of the beaſts. See how it is deſcribed by Pignorius *de ſervis*. *Cato* the elder, ſo much celebrated by the *Romans*, was a bad maſter to his ſlaves, and is juſtly cenſured on that account by *Plutarch*, in *Vit. Caton.* By the *Roman* laws a ſlave could not bear teſtimony without undergoing the rack. By the ſame laws, if a man were killed in his own houſe, all his domeſtic ſlaves were to be put to death, though their innocence were ever ſo evident. *Tacitus* Annal. XIV. 42.

Servi ſunt? imo homines. Servi ſunt? imo contubernales. Servi ſunt? imo humiles amici. Servi ſunt? imo conſervi, ſi cogitaveris tantundem in utroſque licere Fortunæ, &c. Seneca Epiſt. 47. See the reſt.

to

to fight with wild beaſts, and to murder each other for the entertainment of the aſſembly. The *Romans* were exceſſively fond of this abominable diverſion, and ſcarce can any writer amongſt them be found who has declared a diſapprobation of it, except *Seneca* * the philoſopher.

Chriſtianity has in no ſmall meaſure removed theſe enormities.

Chriſti-

* *Caſu in meridianum ſpectaculum incidi, luſus expectant et aliquid laxamenti, quo hominum oculi ab humano cruore acquieſcant. Contra eſt. Quicquid ante pugnatum eſt, miſericordia fuit. Nunc omiſſis nugis, mera homicidia ſunt; nihil habent quo tegantur —— Sed latrocinium fecit aliquis: quid ergo meruit? ut ſuſpendatur. Occidit hominem. Qui occidit, ille meruit ut hoc paterętur: tu quid meruiſti miſer, ut hoc ſpectes?* Seneca, *Epiſt.* 7.

Homo, ſacra res, homo, jam per luſum et jocum occiditur: et quem erudiri ad accipienda inferendaque vulnera nefas erat, is jam nudus inermiſque producitur, ſatiſque ſpectaculi in homine mors eſt. Idem *Epiſt.* 95.

There were ſome in the time of *Cicero*, and probably they were *Greeks*, not *Romans*, who condemned this barbarity, amongſt whom I wiſh I could place *Cicero* himſelf: he ſays, *Crudele gladiatorum ſpectaculum et inhumanum nonnullis videri ſolet: et haud ſcio an ita ſit, ut nunc fit: cum vero fontes ferro depugnabant, auribus fortaſſe multæ, oculis quidem nulla poterat eſſe fortior contra dolorem et mortem diſciplina.* Tuſc. Diſp. II. 16.

The Emperor *Marcus Aurelius*, ſays *Dio*, ſo much diſliked blood-ſhed and ſlaughter, that he ordered the Gladi-

Christianity has abolished polygamy, and in a great degree * slavery, and thereby has made the condition of millions far more easy than it would else have been.

It has † had some influence upon the civil laws ‡ of nations, and made them in

ators at *Rome* to fight with foils, or blunted weapons; Μάρκος γε μὴν οὔτω τι φόνοις οὐκ ἔχαιρεν, ὥστε καὶ τοὺς μονομάχους ἐν τῇ Ῥώμῃ ὥσπερ ἀθλητὰς ἀκινδύνως ἑώρα μαχομένους· σιδήριον γὰρ οὐδέποτε οὐδενὶ αὐτῶν ὀξὺ ἔδωκεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀμβλέσιν, ὥσπερ ἐσφαιρομένοις, πάντες ἐμάχοντο.

To these we may add the *Greek* philosopher *Demonax*, who, when the *Athenians* were deliberating whether they should have Gladiators as well as the *Corinthians*, advised them not to vote for it, till they had pulled down the Altar of *Mercy*.

Ἀθηναίων σκεπτομένων κατὰ ζῆλον τὸν πρὸς Κορινθίους καταστήσασθαι θέαν μονομάχων, προσελθὼν εἰς αὐτοὺς, Μὴ πρότερον, ἔφη, ταῦτα, ὦ Ἀθηναῖοι, ψηφίσεσθε, ἂν μὴ τοῦ Ἐλέου τὸν βωμὸν καθέλητε. *Lucian* Demon.

It was a long time before Christianity could get the better of this custom. *Constantine* made a law against it, but it crept in again, and *Honorius* abolished it *A. D.* 403.

* The Gospel has not said indeed that it is unlawful to have slaves, but by its mild genius and temper it seems by degrees to have expell'd this tyranny from Christian kingdoms.

† Leges Romanæ duriores erant, quam lenitas Christiana patiatur. *Grotius* de Jure B. I. II. § X. 4. ubi vide notas.

‡ Thus, *Constantine* abolished the cruel punishment of crucifixion and of breaking the legs, and of marking the face with a hot iron.

He

in ſeveral reſpects more gentle and merciful.

It

He forbad to ſeize upon men's ſervants and cattle for the payment of taxes, and to put ſuch debtors in common jayls, or to beat them.

He ordered that priſoners ſhould be well uſed and conveniently lodged, and made laws in favour of ſlaves, and againſt exceſſive uſury.

Valentinian I. made laws to releaſe priſoners, not guilty of capital crimes, at *Eaſter*; and other Emperors did the ſame afterwards.

He ordered phyſicians to be appointed, with ſalaries, who ſhould take care of the poor at *Rome*.

Gratian made a law, that thoſe women, whoſe birth and condition obliged them to appear upon the ſtage, ſhould not be compelled to it, if they were Chriſtians.

Alſo that perſons condemned to die ſhould have thirty days reſpit. *Theodoſius* confirmed this law.

Theodoſius I. made laws in favour of the fortunes and families of condemned perſons, and of thoſe who had found a treaſure.

Forbad that girls ſhould be brought up minſtrels, *tibicinæ*.

Made a law concerning wills, which greatly favoured the natural heirs againſt his own intereſt.

Made a law, that if any perſon, forgetting all modeſty and decency, ſhould revile the Emperor, and cenſure his conduct, he ſhould not be called to account for it, nor ſuffer the puniſhment which uſed to be inflicted on ſuch offenders.

Made a law againſt an infamous way of puniſhing women convicted of adultery, who had been compelled to be common proſtitutes, if *Socrates* be not miſtaken, *Hiſt. Eccl.* V. 18. See the place. But I agree with *Valeſius*, who ſays,

It has been the cauſe of many * public charities, and has provided for the education of the ignorant, and for the relief of the ſick and needy.

It has given men a clearer knowledge of God and of morality and of a future ſtate. Hence it comes to paſs that the far greater part of Chriſtians, when they do amiſs, ſin againſt conſcience, and feel many reſtraints and checks, by which they are at leaſt kept from ſome crimes which they elſe would have committed, and incited to do ſome good actions which they would not have performed.

Vix erediderim Romanos eâ pœnâ affeciſſe mulieres adulteras, &c.

Ordered that all who in their infancy had been ſold for ſlaves ſhould be ſet at liberty, many of whom belonged to the Emperor.

Honorius made a very merciful law in favour of priſoners.

Theſe laws may be ſeen in the *Theodoſian Code*.

* I find in profane hiſtory ſomething like charity-ſchools, or a proviſion made for poor children by Emperors or other perſons of diſtinction, or by the public; by Nerva, [*Aurel. Victor*] by Trajan, [*Plin.* Paneg. *Dio* LXVIII. 771.] by Adrian, [*Spartian.* in *Hiſt. Aug.*] by T. Antoninus, [*Capitolin.* in *Hiſt. Aug.*] by *Pliny* the younger, perhaps, [*Epiſt.* I. 8. VII. 18.] *Conſtantine*, who was a very generous prince, did as much, and more. *Cod. Theodoſ.* L. II. t. 27. l. 1.

Several

Several of theſe benefits are more evidently viſible in ſome Chriſtian * countries than in others, but they are to be found in ſome meaſure in all nations where the Goſpel is received.

The Goſpel for ſeveral ages after its eſtabliſhment was of ſome † benefit even to thoſe who received it not; for the *Pagan* philoſophers ‡ and learned men in thoſe times were improved in their notions of morality and religion; for which we can account no way ſo probably as from their intercourſe and converſation and debates with Chriſtians.

The Goſpel has likewiſe been in ſome meaſure ſerviceable to thoſe great and populous nations who are Mohammedans; for their religion, falſe and fooliſh as it is, § borrows

* The Church of Chriſt here upon earth, in a true ſenſe, is the whole number of all thoſe in all places, who believe in Chriſt, and endeavour to know his will and obey his laws. Every perſon who is in ſuch a diſpoſition of mind, is a member of the univerſal Church, and as ſuch, a Chriſtian.

† *Whitb.* on 1 *Cor.* xv. 44.

‡ See the Diſc. on the Goſpel as it is grace and truth.

§ Juſtice requires of us to give every one his due, and αἰνεῖν αἰνετὰ, to commend what is commendable, whereſo-

rows ſeveral things from *Judaiſm* and Chriſtianity; it teaches the belief of one God maker of heaven and earth, and of a providence, and of a future ſtate. Therefore it is better than *Epicurean* notions of the mortality of the ſoul, and of a God who takes no care of the world, it is better than *Pagan*

ever we find it. It ſhould be acknowledged that the falſe Prophet, in his Coran, requires the belief of one God, truſt in him, frequent prayer and faſting, alms-giving even to ſtrangers, keeping of covenants, juſtice in dealings, patience in adverſity, to honour father and mother, and to maintain them if they are old and poor; that he forbids uſury, bearing falſe witneſs, profane ſwearing by the name of God, and the murdering of infants which had been common in *Arabia*.

But Mohammediſm is a religion deſtitute of all proper evidence, and liable to inſuperable objections.

Mohammed has ſufficiently confuted himſelf by ſtriking out ſome paſſages of the Coran, upon ſecond thoughts, and when his exigences required it, ſaying, *In the name of God, whatever verſe we ſhall abrogate*, &c. ch. II. p. 14. and ch. XVI. p. 223. *Sale*'s Edit.

The 23d chapter ſhews him to be an impoſtor.

His invention was very poor and narrow. If the repetitions were blotted out, not more than a fourth part of his book would be left.

In ſome paſſages of the Coran he denies a poſſibility of ſalvation to thoſe who reject it; in other places he is thought by ſome to have left room for virtuous men who believed a God and a future ſtate. See ch. II. p. 8. and the notes; and *Fabricius* Luc. Evang. p. 491.

idolatry,

idolatry, than the worſhip of Dæmons, of falſe Gods, of ſtocks and ſtones.

4. It is propheſied of Chriſt that he ſhould be a conqueror, a proſperous and victorious king, who ſhould ſubdue all his enemies. To him, as he is a king, belongs the right of judging and puniſhing thoſe who rebel againſt him, and refuſe to ſubmit to him. Kings in ancient times were alſo judges, and in Scripture are called judges of the earth. And of the Meſſias it is ſaid, that he ſhould judge with righteouſneſs, that he ſhould ſmite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and ſlay the wicked, that his enemies ſhould lick the duſt, that he ſhould break in pieces the oppreſſor, that kings ſhould periſh, if he was angry with them, and that he ſhould ſmite in ſunder their heads over divers countries; and many like acts of power are aſcribed to him. In the New Teſtament alſo our Saviour, under ſome parables, repreſents himſelf as a king, who ſhould deſtroy his enemies, and declares that all judgment is committed to him by his Father.

Many of theſe acts of regal authority have had their ſignal completion; for,

First; Christ punished *Judæa* with utter desolation. His rebellious subjects there, who would not that he should reign over them, were given up to a reprobate mind, to blindness and madness, and by their own outrageous iniquity, by civil discord, by famine, by war with the *Romans*, suffered * calamities not to be equalled in the † history of any other people; their city and temple were destroyed, and those of them who survived were scattered into all lands.

After this, the *Jews* of *Libya*, *Ægypt*, *Cyprus*, and *Mesopotamia* rebelled, and slew an innumerable multitude of people, for which they were severely punished by *Trajan*.

After this, when ‡ the *Jews* began to gather and to settle once again in *Jerusalem*, they drew upon themselves the arms of the

* Before this, in the time of *Caius*, a slaughter was made of the *Jews* in *Ægypt*, *Mesopotamia*, *Babylon*, *Syria*, and *Seleucia*, which was, says *Josephus*, φόνος πολὺς, καὶ ὁπόσος οὐκ ἱστορημένος πρότερον, a greater destruction than any that was ever before recorded of them. *Ant.* XVIII. 9.

† These calamities were not confined to *Palæstine*, but reached them in all places where they dwelt, as in *Ægypt*, *Syria*, &c.

‡ *Eusebius* E. H. IV. 2. 6. & *Valesius*; & *Fabric.* Luc. Evang. p. 124, &c.

Emperor

Emperor *Adrian*, and, if we may believe * their own writers, they ſuffered calamities not leſs ſevere and extenſive than the former.

In the time of *Conſtantius* they † rebelled again, and *Gallus* ſlew many thouſands of them, not ſparing even the children, and burnt *Diocæſarea*, *Tiberias*, *Dioſpolis*, and other towns of the *Jews*.

After this the Emperor *Julian*, in hatred to the Chriſtian religion, would have ſettled them in *Jeruſalem*, and reſtored to them their temple; but all his attempts were fruſtrated in a miraculous manner by Divine Providence.

After this, in later times, Chriſtian princes entertained a deſign to deliver the holy land from the infidels, and many attempts of that kind were made, which God would not ſuffer to proſper; but *Judæa* lies to this day barren, uncultivated, thinly inhabited, a memorable and dreadful example of Divine juſtice.

Secondly, it has been a common opinion that our Saviour puniſhed the *Roman* Em-

* *Buxtorf* in vocibus *Bitter*, *Barchoziba*.

† *Hieron.* in *Chron. ann.* 355. *Socrat.* Hiſt. Eccl. II. 33. *Sozom.* IV. 7.

pire

pire, that great adverſary and oppreſſor of Chriſtianity, that cruel perſecutor of his Church, that empire of Satan. Thus much is certain, that moſt of the perſecuting Emperors were cut off one after another in a * very remarkable manner, and that the Empire was viſited with plague and famine, with civil wars, with inundations of ſavage and barbarous people, *Perſians*, *Goths*, *Germans*, *Scythians*, &c. till all *Italy* and † *Rome* itſelf fell into their hands and was plundered by them.

* See Grotius *Append. de Antichr.* p. 499. and the writer *de Mortib. Perſecut.*

† However it muſt be confeſſed that *Rome* at that time was Chriſtian, and under Chriſtian Emperors. *Joſ. Mede* has taken notice of this, and ſays; *Although the Roman Emperors were now become Chriſtians, yet would not God forget their former ſlaughters of his ſervants, but require their blood at the hand of that empire.* p. 919. *Nec eſt*, ſays Grotius, *quod quiſquam opponat tunc Romam fuiſſe Chriſtianam. Contrà enim verum eſt, etiam poſtquam Imperatores facti erant Chriſtiani, Romæ manſiſſe idololatriam tum in Senatu, tum in plebe.* ad *Apocal.* XVII. 16. See alſo *Hammond* there, and Grotius *Append. de Antichr.* p. 501.

Add to theſe the following obſervation; *Scribere enim diſpoſui —— quomodo et per quos Chriſti Eccleſia nata ſit et adulta, perſecutionibus creverit, —— et poſtquam ad Chriſtianos principes venerit, potentiâ quidem et divitiis major, virtutibus minor facta ſit.* Hieronymus *in vitâ S. Malchi.*

Theſe

Theſe acts of regal authority Chriſt has executed. Some remain, which in their due ſeaſon will be accompliſhed; for it is generally ſuppoſed that the prophets ſpeak of a time when the *Jews* ſhall be converted, and the fulneſs of the *Gentiles* ſhall flow into the Church, and the kingdoms of the world ſhall be the kingdoms of Chriſt, when the Goſpel ſhall be farther ſpread, and better underſtood, and more religiouſly obſerved than it is at preſent. And without queſtion, theſe great events will be attended with as great and conſpicuous acts of Chriſt's royal power and majeſty.

But the moſt illuſtrious act of royal authority which Chriſt will exerciſe, will be at the end of all things, when he will judge the world in the trueſt and largeſt ſenſe, when this ſinful earth, the ſeat of folly and iniquity, ſhall be ſet on fire and conſume away before his preſence, when he will paſs ſentence on the evil Angels, when he will raiſe up the dead, and diſtribute rewards and puniſhments to all, proportionably to their behaviour in the days of their mortality.

Thus

Thus are we come to the moſt glorious part of Chriſt's reign, and alſo to the concluſion of it. It is ſaid, by the Angel, that he ſhould reign for ever, and of his kingdom there ſhould be no end; and the Angel's words are taken from *Iſaiah*, who propheſying of the Meſſias, ſays; *Of the increaſe of his government and peace there ſhall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to eſtabliſh it with judgment and with juſtice, from henceforth even for ever.* *Daniel* ſpeaks in the ſame manner: *His dominion is an everlaſting dominion, which ſhall not paſs away, and his kingdom that which ſhall not be deſtroyed.* And again: *The God of heaven ſhall ſet up a kingdom which ſhall never be deſtroyed, and it ſhall ſtand for ever.* In this alſo Chriſt's kingdom was to differ from all other kingdoms, from all the preceding human monarchies, which when they had arrived to their full ſtrength and glory, had the ſame fate which attends human bodies, and either were quickly deſtroyed by violent cauſes, or inſenſibly decayed and moulder'd away, ſo that no tokens of them would have remained, if Hiſtory had not written their epitaph, and told

told us where they lay, and what they had been.

Not ſuch was to be the fate of Chriſt's kingdom, to which the prophets, with one voice, have promiſed an eternal duration.

Yet St. *Paul* in his firſt Epiſtle to the *Corinthians*, ſays that Chriſt's kingdom ſhall have an end. To reconcile which with the propheſies, we muſt obſerve that the expreſſions, * *everlaſting*, *for ever*, and *without end*, are uſed by ſacred, as well as prophane authors, in different ſenſes, according to the ſubject to which they are applied. When therefore it is ſaid that Chriſt ſhall reign for ever, † the meaning ſeems to be that he ſhall reign as long as the world laſts; when it is ſaid that of his kingdom there ſhall be no end, the meaning is that it ſhall not paſs away like other kingdoms,

* See *Vitringa* in *Iſai.* Vol. II. p. 220. *Grotius* de Ver. R. C. V. 7. *Blackwall* Sacr. Claſs. p. 149. *Clarke* Serm. IV. Vol. I. The comparative degree *ἀθανατώτερος* is uſed by *Plato* in his *Phædo*, and *Sympoſ.*

† In like manner it is ſaid of Chriſt, that he is *a Prieſt for ever* and *hath an unchangeable prieſthood*, Hebr. vii. that is, he is a prieſt, as long as the office can ſubſiſt, as long as there are men for whom he may intercede, and whom he may reconcile to God, as long as the world endures.

and

and that there ſhall be no end of it, till the conſummation of all things.

Then cometh the end, ſays St. Paul, *when* Chriſt *ſhall have delivered up the kingdom to God even the Father, when he ſhall have put down all rule, and all authority and power; for he muſt reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The laſt enemy which ſhall be deſtroyed is death. And when all things ſhall be ſubdued unto him, then ſhall the Son alſo himſelf be ſubject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.*

Chriſt will then have no more enemies to ſubdue, when death ſhall be deſtroyed, and ſin ſhall receive its due correction: he will have no more occaſion to protect and to reward his ſervants, when he has raiſed them up to eternal life, and given them ſeats in his kingdom of heaven. * Theſe acts therefore of regal authority he can exerciſe no longer.

But ſince Chriſt is to all his faithful ſervants, not only a creator, but a guide and a teacher, a ſaviour and a mediator, a king and a judge, the benefits received from theſe relations which Chriſt bears to them are of an

* See *Whitby* on II. *Tim.* iv. 1.

endleſs

endleſs nature; and an eternal obligation will lie upon them to offer up to him the juſt returns of love and gratitude, of reverence and adoration, through all ages; according to thoſe forms of thankſgiving in the Revelation. *Bleſſing and honour and glory and power be unto him that ſitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever. —Unto him that loved us and waſhed us from our ſins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and prieſts unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

We are taught to pray daily that the kingdom of God, or of Chriſt may come; in which words we pray that the Goſpel of Chriſt may flouriſh more and more, and that the number of his ſervants may increaſe continually. But to pray for this is not enough; we cannot indeed pray for it with any ſincerity, unleſs we uſe our beſt endeavours to accompliſh theſe pious wiſhes.

Setting aſide the injudicious, inhuman, and infamous methods, by which too many have pretended to do God ſervice, we ſhall find that there remain only the following ways

ways by which we may promote the enlargement of our Lord's kingdom; and they are ways in which every Chriſtian, more or leſs, is capable of performing his part.

Firſt, an endeavour to underſtand the Goſpel, that we may be able to teach thoſe who are committed to our care and placed under our authority; to remove the doubts of the unſtable; to diſpel the errors of the miſtaken; and to anſwer the objections of adverſaries.

Secondly, a readineſs to countenance and aſſiſt any attempt which is made to propagate the Goſpel, or to inſtruct the young, the poor, and the ignorant, when we have reaſon to hope that they ſhall be inſtructed in the religion of Chriſt, not in fanaticiſm and enthuſiaſm.

Thirdly, a diſpoſition to think and ſpeak favourably of thoſe who believe in the ſame Lord and Maſter with us, though their belief be not exactly conformable to ours, eſpecially when they think and ſpeak favourably of us.

Fourthly, rational notions of the Goſpel, which will teach us to repreſent it as a religion

gion in which all things * neceſſary to be believed or done are delivered with ſufficient clearneſs, as a religion which conſiſts principally in purity of heart, in morality, in goodneſs, in righteouſneſs, in the love of God and of mankind, as a religion in which charity takes the upper hand of faith, and hope and knowledge, and is the moſt excellent of all accompliſhments.

Laſtly, a life conformable to the religion which we profeſs, which would do more towards recommending our Chriſtian faith to the bulk of mankind, than all that we can

* Πάντα τὰ ἀναγκαῖα δῆλα. *Chryſoſt.* Hom. 36. in I. ad Cor.

Non multum tibi nocebit tranſiſſe quæ nec licet ſcire, nec prodeſt. Involuta veritas in alto latet. Nec de malignitate Naturæ queri poſſumus: quia nullius rei difficilis inventio eſt, niſi cujus hic unus inventæ fructus eſt, inveniſſe. Quicquid nos meliores beatoſque facturum eſt, aut in aperto, aut in proximo poſuit. *Seneca* de Benef. VII. 1.

Ne curioſus quære cauſſas omnium,
Quæcunque libris vis Prophetarum indidit
Afflata cœlo, plena veraci Deo:
Nec operta ſacri ſupparo ſilentii
Irrumpere aude, ſed prudenter præteri.
Neſcire velle, quæ Magiſter optimus
Docere non vult, erudita inſcitia eſt.
Joſ. Scaliger.

See *Whitby* on *Acts* viii. 21. *Tit.* i. 2.

ſay in behalf of it. The want of this has been an impediment to the progreſs of Chriſtianity, a ſcandal and a ſtumbling-block in the way of unbelievers.

They object to us that ſince we ſay and do not, either our religion is impracticable, or we believe nothing of it, and by our behaviour acknowledge it to be falſe.

To which we might make more than one reply;

We might ſay that the heart and the underſtanding of man are frequently at variance, that he often acts contrary to his judgment and conſcience; and therefore it muſt not be haſtily concluded that he rejects the doctrines which he does not practiſe.

We might ſay that every age which has paſs'd ſince our Saviour's time, eſpecially the earlieſt ages of the Church, has afforded eminent examples of Chriſtian piety.

We might ſay that religion is what it is in itſelf; muſt ſtand, if it ſtands, by its own intrinſic merit, and by the evidence which accompanies it; that its truth and value is no more leſſened by the ill uſe which men make

make of it, than the ſun ceaſes to ſhine when we ſhut our eyes to his beams.

We might ſay that Chriſtianity, though it has not all the happy effects which were to be wiſhed, yet prevents and reſtrains many evils, and is the cauſe of much good in the world, as we have already ſhewed in ſeveral inſtances.

But the beſt anſwer of all would be to forſake our ſins and amend our ways; and then our good actions would ſpeak for us, and wipe off this imputation caſt upon our faith and our religion.

It was a ſingular honour and advantage to the cauſe of Chriſtianity that its * ancient Writers, in their apologies for it, could addreſs themſelves to the *Romans* in ſuch words as theſe; We are grown ſo many in number, that if we were only to withdraw our ſelves from your dominions, we ſhould ruin you, you could not ſubſiſt without us. Yet is our innocence as remarkable as our increaſe. Your jayls ſwarm with criminals of your own religion: but you ſhall not find there one Chriſtian, unleſs he be there be-

* Tertullian, Minucius Felix, &c.

cauſe he is Chriſtian, and purely on account of his faith.

Every one who believes the Goſpel, ſhould conſider himſelf as a ſubject of Chriſt's kingdom, and remember that he is not admitted into it to provide only for his own future welfare, and to neglect the intereſt of the ſociety to which he belongs. He ſhould account it his duty, his honour, and his happineſs, to increaſe the number of his fellow-ſubjects; and to this purpoſe he ſhould be ready to employ his reputation, his learning, his abilities, his authority, and his fortunes. To turn men from ſin to righteouſneſs, and to enlarge the kingdom of God upon earth, is an office of ſuch dignity and importance, that our Lord deſcended from heaven to execute it; and bleſſed is that ſervant, whom, when he cometh, he ſhall find to be, or to have been ſo occupied.

IV.

IV.

The fitneſs of the time when Chriſt came into the world.

THERE are many propheſies in the Old Teſtament relating to the Meſſias, ſome of which point out a certain time in which he ſhould appear.

It was foretold by * *Haggai* and by *Malachi* that he ſhould come whilſt the temple ſtood. It was foretold by *Daniel* that the kingdom of the Meſſias ſhould be ſet up in the time of the fourth kingdom, which was

* ii, 9.

It may be objected that Chriſt came not whilſt the ſecond temple ſtood, but after the third temple had been built by *Herod*, and that conſequently the prophecy of *Haggai* was not accompliſhed in him. But the *Jews* always accounted *Herod*'s temple as the ſecond temple, and always called it ſo; and what *Herod* did, might well be deemed rather a repairing and improving of the ſecond temple, than the building of a third, becauſe the daily ſacrifice and the ſervice of the temple never ceaſed during the work, nor was it taken down all at once. See the Commentators on *Joſephus* Ant. XV. 11. Sect. 2. 3. and *Grotius* on *Matt.* xxiv. 1. and on *Malach.* iii. 1. and *Le Clerc* Hiſt. Eccl. p. 197.

the *Roman* Empire, and that he ſhould appear about four hundred and ninety years after the rebuilding of *Jeruſalem*.

Theſe propheſies were accompliſhed in our Saviour, who honoured the temple with his preſence, after whoſe death and according to whoſe prediction that temple was entirely deſtroyed, the *Jewiſh* Government was diſſolved, and a diſperſion of that people enſued which ſtill continues.

At the time of his appearance there was a general expectation amongſt the *Jews* of a Meſſias. In the New Teſtament mention is made of perſons who waited for the conſolation of *Iſrael*, who looked for redemption in *Jeruſalem*, who thought that the kingdom of God, or of the Meſſias, ſhould immediately appear. We find that it was the judgment of the learned alſo, of the chief prieſts and ſcribes. When *John* the Baptiſt entered into his miniſtry, the *Jews* ſent prieſts and Levites to ask him whether he were the Chriſt.

Herod was alarmed * at the coming of the wiſe men, he enquired of the learned *Jews*

* St. *Matthew* ſays that at the birth of Jeſus, Herod *was troubled*, ἐταράχθη, *and all Jeruſalem with him*, ii. 3. To which

Jews where Chriſt ſhould be born, and hearing that it ſhould be at *Bethlehem*, he deſtroyed all the male children there under a

which the Author of the *Scheme of Lit. Proph.* objects; *How could all Jeruſalem be troubled to hear their Meſſiah, or deliverer was born; when the Jews at all times hoped and deſired to ſee him?* &c. p. 35.

Herod and his friends, and all the irreligious *Jews*, when they heard that the Meſſias was come, ἐταράχθησαν, *were moved*, with grief and fear. The reſt of the *Jews*, who wiſhed for the Meſſias, ἐταράχθησαν, *were moved* with an anxiety made up of hopes, and fears, and uncertainty, and expectation. All therefore were put into a commotion, and had their apprehenſions and uneaſineſs, but in ſome they were mixed with hope and joy.

Phædo, in the Dialogue of *Plato* which bears his name, thus deſcribes the painful pleaſure which he felt whilſt he was converſing with *Socrates* for the laſt time —— ἀλλ' ἀτεχνῶς ἄτοπόν τι μοι πάθος παρῆν, καί τις ἀήθης κρᾶσις ἀπό τε τῆς ἡδονῆς συγκεκραμένη ὁμοῦ καὶ τῆς λύπης, ἐνθυμουμένῳ ὅτι ἀυτίκα ἐκεῖνος ἔμελλε τελευτᾶν. καὶ πάντες ὁτι παρόντες χρόνον τινὰ ὅτῳ διεκείμεθα, —— καὶ ἀυτὸς ἔγωγε ἐτεταράγμην, καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι· *Sed affectus quidam plane mirus, atque inſolita voluptatis ſimul et doloris permixtio me invaſerat conſiderantem illi paullo poſt moriendum eſſe. Et quicumque aderamus ſimiliter ferme affecti eramus,* —— *atque ipſe aliique perturbati eramus.*

Vix ſum apud me, ita animus commotust metu,
Spe, gaudio, mirando hoc tanto tam repentino bono.
Terent. *Andr.* V. 4.

—— *animo ſpem turbidus hauſit inanem.*
Virgil *Æn.* X. 648.

a certain age, hoping to cut off the Meſſias. He is charged by * ſome, but it ſeems to be a miſtake, with burning the genealogies of all the *Jewiſh* families, that the lineage of *David*, from whom the Meſſias was to ſpring, might be unknown; and it has been ſaid that he undertook to rebuild the temple, becauſe it was thought that the Meſſias would perform that work.

A great number of impoſtors, falſe Chriſts and falſe prophets, taking advantage of this prevailing opinion, endeavoured to impoſe upon the *Jews*. Many of theſe deceivers appeared from the days of *Herod* the great to the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*.

Amongſt † the *Romans* alſo, and in the Eaſtern parts of the world there was an opinion that ſome extraordinary perſon ſhould ariſe and rule the earth, which

Euæ! recenti mens trepidat metu,
Plenoque Bacchi pectore turbidum
Lætatur.

Horat. *Carm.* II. 19.

Spesque, audaxque una metus, et fiducia pallens.

Statius *Theb.* VI. 393.

&c. &c. &c.

* *Euſebius* E. H. 1. 7.

† *Joſephus* Bell. Jud. VI. 5. *Tacitus. Suetonius.*

earth,

muſt have come in all probability from the *Jews*.

The *Samaritans* hated the *Jews* ſo much that they cannot well be thought to have borrowed the hopes of a Meſſias from that nation. That they entertained ſuch hopes we read in the New Teſtament; which is alſo confirmed by the attempts of *Simon Magus*, and other *Samaritan* impoſtors.

Concerning the fitneſs of the time when Chriſt came into the world, the holy Scriptures ſay little; and we can only offer conjectures, which ought to have no more of authority than they are found upon examination to have of probability.

1. Our Lord came when men had been prepared by a long ſeries of propheſies to expect and receive him.

The promiſes of a Meſſias were at firſt more obſcure, and as the time of his coming drew near, more plain; and during the long interval between *Adam* and *Malachi*, different predictions concerning the perſon and the offices and the ſufferings and the proſperity of the Meſſias were delivered, which contained

contained many things ſeemingly irreconcileable, and yet accompliſhed in Chriſt.

As the knowledge of theſe predictions was in a manner confined to the *Jewiſh* nation, it pleaſed God to make their religion * more known when the time of Chriſt's appearing drew near. Before his coming the Old Teſtament was tranſlated into the *Greek* language, a language † then, and long afterwards, the moſt univerſally underſtood, whereby the ‡ *Gentiles* had acceſs

* *Euſebius* endeavours to prove that the *Gentiles* were indebted to the *Jews* on many accounts, *Eccl. Hiſt.* I. 2. & *Præp. Ev.*

† It is certain that the *Romans* took pains to propagate their language, and to eſtabliſh its ſuperior dignity, of which good proofs are collected by *Bayle, Diction.* CLAUDE, p. 897. But in the time of Chriſt and his Apoſtles, *Greek* was really the univerſal language. The New Teſtament is a proof it, if proof were wanting; and this is one reaſon, amongſt others, which may be given why St. *Matthew* probably wrote his Goſpel in *Greek*. The Epiſtle to the *Hebrews* was compoſed in *Greek*, though it was written to *Jews* dwelling in *Judæa* and *Palæſtine*. *Græca leguntur in omnibus fere gentibus: Latina ſuis finibus, exiguis ſanè, continentur.* Cicero *Orat.* pro *Arch.* *Quamdiu ſteterit aut Latinæ linguæ potentia, aut Græcæ gratia.* Seneca *Conſ. ad Polyb.* 21.

‡ But it muſt be owned that the Scriptures, even after this tranſlation, were little known to many of the *Gentiles*

ceſs to ſacred hiſtory and to the prophetic writings; and it appears from the books of the New Teſtament, and from other writers, that many proſelytes had learned of the *Jews* to worſhip one God and to obey the moral parts of the Law of *Moſes*, and that ſuch perſons were to be found in moſt nations of the known world.

2. Chriſt came when the *Jews* wanted the Meſſias as an inſtructor.

The *Jews*, who from the time of *Moſes* to *Malachi* were ſeldom without a prophet, had none, as far as we can find, from the days of *Malachi* to the coming of our Saviour. The prophets uſed to be ſent to them to reprove them for their faults, to require from them an obſervance of the laws of *Moſes*, and to foretel the Meſſias: but the writings of the prophets were in their hands, and conſtantly read; and ſerved for theſe purpoſes as much as any new meſſenger could have ſerved, unleſs he had been one of ſuperior authority to his predeceſſors. The

tiles for a conſiderable time. *Greek* and *Roman* hiſtorians, as *Diodorus Siculus*, *Trogus Pompeius* who is abridged by *Juſtin*, *Strabo*, *Tacitus*, and others ſeem to have been ignorant of *Jewiſh* Antiquities.

Jews

Jews wanted no * new propheſies concerning the Meſſias; they ſaw him promiſed, as they thought, clearly in many places of the ſacred Books. There was as little occaſion for one who ſhould preſs upon them an adherence to the ritual Law; they obſerved it carefully, or rather ſuperſtitiouſly: but of two things they particularly ſtood in need, firſt, of inſtruction in the true nature of the ceremonial law; ſecondly, of receiving fuller aſſurances of a future ſtate. The ceremonial law was given to the *Jews*, partly in condeſcenſion to their temper and capacities, and partly to keep them ſeparated from the vices and idolatries of the Heathen. But their wrong opinions of it were attended with bad conſequences: they eſteemed it at too high a rate; they deſpiſed the *Gentiles*, and thought them excluded, in a great meaſure, from the favour of God, not ſo much for their vices, as becauſe they were legally impure, and obſerved not the Moſaic rites; and conſequently they entertained unſuitable notions of God and of morality. But the time was now approaching when their ceremonial law would be almoſt impracticable,

* See Le Clerc *de l' Incred.* P. II. c. 7.

when

when the *Romans* would deprive them of thoſe ſmall remains of liberty which they poſſeſſed, would deſtroy their temple, drive them out of their land, and diſperſe them into all nations. It was therefore neceſſary that they ſhould be taught that their ceremonies were no longer of importance, that God was no reſpecter of perſons, and that all good men were his children, that a *Jew* might perform his duty in another country as well as in *Judæa*, that he might converſe indifferently and freely with all the ſober and virtuous, that he ought to think himſelf a citizen of the world, account every man his * neighbour, and love him as ſuch.

The doctrine of a future ſtate had not been delivered in a full, clear, and ſatisfactory manner in the Law or in the prophets. The *Sadducees* rejected it, ſuppoſing it not to

* The doctrine of univerſal love and charity was very neceſſary to be inculcated to *Jews* and *Gentiles*. Many *Pagans* of great renown had carried the love of their country to a vitious exceſs, and had not ſcrupled to injure and oppreſs other nations that they might advance the power and glory of their own. The *Romans* had not been free from this fault; the *Lacedæmonians* had been ſcandalouſly guilty of it. See *Plutarch* in *Ageſil.* et *Alcibiad.* *Thucydides* L. V. and *Grotius* de Jure B. *Proleg.* 3. 23. 24.

be

be contained in the ſacred books; and the *Phariſees* and * *Eſſenes* who admitted it, founded their belief upon conſequences drawn from ſome expreſſions in Scripture, upon tradition, and upon ſuch arguments as their reaſon ſuggeſted, and had mixed together ſome true and ſome falſe notions about it. The expreſs promiſes made in the law to the righteous were of temporal good things, and theſe promiſes began to be leſs and leſs fulfilled, to the diſappointment of many pious perſons who knew not how to reconcile theſe ways of providence with the holy Scriptures. It was therefore expedient that they ſhould be taught by the Meſſias, that as the *Jewiſh* commonwealth with its political and ceremonial laws would ſoon ceaſe, God interpoſed no longer in their behalf, but invited the *Jews* and the reſt of mankind to a more ſublime and ſpiritual religion, and would beſtow upon his ſervants a recompenſe infinitely ſurpaſſing all that this unhappy world can beſtow.

3. About the time of Chriſt's coming, religion and morality were univerſally cor-

* *Eſſenes* & *Therapeutæ*; men who ſeem to have been but one remove from thoſe, who, by the *Roman* laws, were *ad agnatos et gentiles deducendi.*

rupted

rupted and greatly wanted reformation. The *Jewiſh* Church was overrun with error and ſuperſtition: the precepts of God, and the rules of equity and common ſenſe gave place to doctrines of men, to traditions contrary to them both. The moſt conſiderable and the moſt learned were thoſe who were the moſt depraved in their opinions, and in their practice, and they who ſhould have taught the truth to others were blind guides deluding thoſe who relied upon them.

We may judge of the ſtate of the *Gentile* world at that time by the ſtate of that conſiderable part of it which belonged to the *Roman* Empire. Public ſpirit, a love of their country, diſintereſtedneſs, frugality, ſobriety, a deſire of reputation, and a contempt of wealth had contributed to make the *Romans* great; but their ſucceſſes proved their undoing, and their national good qualities forſook them: their power ſtill continued, nor could it be ſoon deſtroyed, but the remains of virtue and their liberty fell together: they learned the vices of thoſe whom they had conquered, and taught them theirs in exchange. Such was the condition of the *Gentile* world when our

Lord

Lord ſent forth his Apoſtles to inſtruct and reform them.

4. Though the Heathen were then greatly corrupted in their lives, yet knowledge was conſiderably increaſed, and upon this account it was a proper ſeaſon for our Lord to appear. Truth and learning are friends; error and impoſture flouriſh under the protection of Ignorance. When the Goſpel was offered to mankind, the teachers of it had adverſaries who wanted neither inclination nor abilities to oppoſe it. To make its way at ſuch a time, and to bring over not only the lower ſort of people, but alſo ſome of the learned who turned its own weapons againſt *Paganiſm*, this was an honour to the Chriſtian religion, and one proof of its truth.

5. At the time when our Lord came, the inſufficiency of the *Jewiſh* religion, of natural religion, of ancient tradition, and of philoſophy fully appeared.

The *Jewiſh* * religion was never deſigned to be univerſal or perpetual; it had alſo

* *Euſebius* obſerves ὅτι Μωσέως νόμος μόνῳ Ἰουδαίων ἔθνει, καὶ τούτῳ ἐπὶ τῆς οἰκείας γῆς οἰκεῖν ἀποδέδεικται, καὶ ὅτι διὰ τοῦτο ἑτέρα Προφήτης, καὶ ἑτέρα νόμου προσεδέησε. *Demonſtr. Ev.* I. 1.

other

other defects which appeared the plainer when it was compared with the Chriſtian religion.

The author of the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews* ſhews at large that the Chriſtian inſtitution ought to take place of the *Moſaic*, upon account of the comparative weakneſs and unprofitableneſs of the firſt covenant.

The inſufficiency of the *Jewiſh* revelation appeared alſo in ſome meaſure from that general corruption which had overrun it, of which mention has been already made.

Concerning the inſufficiency of natural religion we may obſerve, that ſince natural religion conſiſts of thoſe duties which human reaſon can diſcover, reaſon and natural religion may here be conſidered as one and the ſame thing. There have been many diſputes about the ſufficiency or inſufficiency of human reaſon. Human reaſon ſeems to have its ſufficiency in one ſenſe, and its inſufficiency in another. The ſufficiency of human reaſon is this, that every man may find out as much as God requires from *him*. Men according to the place and age in which they live, the opportunities and the natural abilities conferred upon them, muſt differ

extremely in knowledge; but every one may know all that God expects of him, which is, that he ſhould act according to his knowledge, and that he ſhould know concerning his duty what he can learn by informing himſelf to the beſt of his power.

The inſufficiency of human reaſon or natural religion conſiſted in this: Religion was ſo corrupted by fables and forgeries, and ſo obſcured by the doubts and diſputes of the learned, that it lay buried under falſhood and uncertainty, and was not to be retrieved without great difficulty.

And, if we may judge of the powers of reaſon by the diſcoveries of this kind which reaſon has ever made, we ſhall find that though ſeveral perſons determined juſtly on ſeveral moral ſubjects, yet there was not one of them who did not fall into ſome miſtakes in matters of morality and of religion.

Concerning the inſufficiency of tradition, we may obſerve that religion, as it ſtood in the heathen world, was not barely the reſult of reaſoning; but that a conſiderable part of it was made up of truths received by tradition from the remoteſt antiquity. Before learning flouriſhed, before the arts of diſputing

ting were cultivated, the general opinion was that one God and Father of all had formed the univerſe, and that the ſoul ſubſiſted after it had left the body, and was happy or unhappy according to its paſt behaviour. Theſe notions were ſo early that the origin of them could never be diſcovered. But as the *Gentiles* were at a loſs to know whence theſe traditions aroſe, ſo neither did they receive them pure and unmixed, nor could they reſtore them to their natural ſimplicity; by length of time they were debaſed, darkned with lies and fables, and therefore grew inſufficient for religious purpoſes, and became weak incitements to virtue.

When natural religion and tradition were thus corrupted, there remained only one human method of retrieving them, and that was philoſophy. This method had been tried, and was found deficient.

For the philoſophers themſelves were not free from groſs miſtakes, from many defects both in principles * and practice. Beſides, the

* *Grotius* on *Rom.* i. 32. mentions the pernicious doctrines of ſome philoſophers. Some of them had looſe notions

the corruption was too general to be cured by philoſophy which was not calculated for the benefit of the common people, nor * underſtood by them. Add to this, that thoſe learned moraliſts uſed to recommend virtue from its natural beauty and decency, † and to inſiſt chiefly on this motive, which though it may weigh much with ſome well diſpoſed minds, yet muſt have little influence upon the bulk of mankind, who will not be moved, unleſs their fears or their hopes be ſtrongly affected.

The philoſophers by their endleſs ‡ diſputes and diviſions darkned many truths,

concerning the lawfulneſs of lying, and of fornication. *Whitby* on *Epheſ.* iv. 25. v. 6. *Theſſ.* i. iv. 5. *Grotius* on *Acts* xv. 20. As to practice, ſee what *Cicero* ſays of them, *Tuſc. Diſp.* II. 4. and the writer of the *Clement. Homil.* V. 18. and *Grotius* de Ver. R. C. II. 18. and *Whitby* on *Theſſ.* i. ii. 9.

* *Horace* tells us that his father uſed to ſay to him ;

——— *Sapiens vitatu quidque petitu*
Sit melius, cauſſas reddet tibi : mî ſatis eſt, ſi
Traditum ab antiquis morem ſervare, tuamque
Dum cuſtodis eges, vitam famamque tueri
Incolumem poſſim. Serm. I. 4.

The reaſonings of the Philoſophers were jargon to this plain honeſt man ; but he thought right to follow whatſoever things were of good report.

† See *Miſcell. Obſerv.* Vol. I. p. 33.

‡ *Nimium altercando veritas amittitur*
In Publii Syri *Sentent.*

and

and taught nothing ſo effectually as doubt and ſuſpence. Inſtead of oppoſing the vulgar ſuperſtitions, they often complied with them, and outwardly conformed to the eſtabliſhed religions. Theſe and other diſadvantages under which philoſophy laboured, ſhew that it had little effect towards a reformation of ſentiments and manners. What it could do, it had done before the coming of Chriſt. It had been tried, and it had been found inſufficient.

6. Laſtly, when our Lord came, * the moſt civilized and the moſt populous parts of *Europe* and *Aſia* were under one government, and ruled by common laws which in the main were juſt and good, the times were more quiet and happy than they had been, commerce flouriſhed, and travelling was made eaſy and ſafe; and this ſtate of things contributed much to the ſpeedy propagation of the Goſpel.

* Ἀνέλειλε γὰρ ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις αὐτοῦ δικαιοσύνη, καὶ πλῆθος εἰρήνης γέγονεν, ἀρξάμενον ἀπὸ τῆς γενέσεως αὐτοῦ, ἐυλογεπίζονλος τοῦ Θεοῦ τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ αὐτοῦ τὰ ἔθνη, ἵν' ὑπὸ ἕνα γένηται τῶν Ῥωμαίων βασιλέα· καὶ μὴ, διὰ τὸ περιέσεσθαι τῶν πολλῶν βασιλειῶν ἄμικτον τῶν ἐθνῶν πρὸς ἄλληλα, χαλεπώτερον γένηται τοῖς ἀποστόλοις τοῦ Ἰησοῦ τὸ ποιῆσαι ὅπερ προσέταξεν αὐτοῖς. *Origen.* contr. Cels. II. p. 79

V.

The teſtimony of John *the Baptiſt.*

OUR Saviour in his diſcourſes with the *Jews* and with his diſciples made uſe of four proofs, to ſhew that he was ſent from God.

The firſt, upon which he plainly lays the greateſt ſtreſs, was taken from the miracles which he wrought. *The works which I do bear witneſs of me, that the Father hath ſent me. If I had not done among them the works which no other man did, they had not had ſin.*

The ſecond was taken from the propheſies which were fulfilled in him. * *If ye had believed Moſes, ye would have believed me,*

* Our Saviour and his Apoſtles often aſſure us that all the prophets, whoſe writings are contained in the Old Teſtament, have ſpoken of the coming of the Meſſias; and upon this, though not upon this either ſingly or chiefly, is founded the truth of our religion; for it ſtands in need of no proofs of its divinity from the Old Teſtament, which ſeems to receive

me, for he wrote of me. Search the Scriptures — for they teſtify of me.

The

ceive more confirmation from the Goſpel, than the Goſpel receives thence.

The propheſies in general were ſo delivered that they ſhould not be underſtood till the event explained them, for which many reaſons might be aſſigned. Hence it comes to paſs that after they have been all fulfilled in Chriſt, and by being compared together have given much light and ſtrength to each other, ſtill many of them, conſidered by themſelves, are not ſo irreſiſtibly evident as to force an aſſent from ſtubborn minds, and room is left for contradiction, doubt or cavil. Some of them are more obſcure and ambiguous, ſome more full and clear. It is reaſonable to ſuppoſe that as the time of Chriſt's coming drew nearer, the predictions concerning him ſhould be more diſtinct and plain; and ſo indeed they are.

Grotius allows that there are texts in the Prophets who lived after the captivity, which relate directly and ſolely to Jeſus Chriſt. His acknowledgment of this is of the more weight, becauſe he cannot be charged with wreſting the Scriptures to that purpoſe, and has been blamed for explaining away ſome propheſies which Chriſtians apply to Chriſt. *Chriſtus*, ſays he, *ut jam appropinquans, apertius a Prophetis indicatus eſt.* Hebr. viii. 8.

That Chriſt was foretold by the prophets, may be ſhewed, I think, without an accurate diſcuſſion of ſingle texts.

There are it may be a hundred different paſſages in the Old Teſtament relating to ſome perſon, whoſoever he be, one or more, and to certain conſiderable changes which ſhould happen in the world. Chriſtians ſay that they relate to Chriſt, and ſome of them are produced in theſe Diſcourſes. He who would ſee more, may conſult *Fabricius*,

The third was his foreknowledge of future events. *Now I tell you before it come, that when it is come to paſs, ye may believe that I am he.*

The fourth was the teſtimony of *John* the Baptiſt, concerning which our Saviour thus reaſons with the *Jews*: *If I bear witneſs of my ſelf*, if I produce no proof of my divine miſſion beſides a bare affirmation of it, *my witneſs is not true*, and I deſerve to be rejected.

There is another that beareth witneſs of me, namely *John* the Baptiſt; and that he

De Ver. Chr. Rel. p. 569. & *Huet* Dem. Ev. *Prop.* VII. Hiſtory, ſacred and profane, ancient and modern, will furniſh us with a variety of heroes, kings, warriors, philoſophers, and illuſtrious perſons. If we endeavour to apply theſe paſſages in the Old Teſtament to any one of theſe great men, for example, to *Judas Maccabæus*, to *Confucius*, to *Socrates*, to *Solon*, to *Numa*, to *Scipio Africanus*, to *Auguſtus Cæſar*, &c. we immediately ſee that it is a vain attempt, that three fourths of them are no ways ſuitable to his character and his deeds, and that it is eaſy to ſelect many ſingle ones amongſt them which cannot poſſibly be adapted to him. If we apply them to Chriſt and to the religion eſtabliſhed by him, a ſurpriſing correſpondence immediately appears.

To aſcribe theſe coincidences to chance, it is to give a very poor and unſatisfactory account of them. He who can believe that chance produced them, ought not to object credulity to Chriſtians.

teſtified

teſtified of me ye know; for, *Ye ſent unto John, and he bare witneſs of the truth. But I receive not teſtimony from man.* I ſtand in no need of the witneſs of *John*, or of any other man.

I put you in mind of it, becauſe, *He was a burning and a ſhining light, and ye were willing for a ſeaſon to rejoyce in his light.* You uſed to acknowledge him to be a prophet and a righteous man; and therefore I inſiſt upon his teſtimony, hoping that it may have ſome good effect upon you.

But I have greater witneſs than that of John; for the works which the Father hath given me to finiſh, the ſame works that I do, bear witneſs of me, that the Father hath ſent me.

This proof taken from the teſtimony of *John*, though our Lord ſpeaks, in a manner, ſlightingly of it, when he compares it to the proof drawn from his own miracles, yet was an argument of particular force to the *Jews*, and could not fail to convince or to confound them: for as we read in another place, they durſt not openly ſpeak againſt *John*, becauſe the people generally had him in eſteem, and thought him a prophet. A

proof

proof therefore from his teſtimony would either remove their doubts, or reduce them to ſilence.

But that the argument, conſidered in it ſelf, is ſatisfactory, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew in the following manner.

I. I will lay before you the teſtimony which *John* bare of Jeſus Chriſt.

II. I will give you ſome account of the life and character of *John*.

III. I will thence ſhew that he is an unexceptionable witneſs,

IV. I will endeavour to remove an objection which may be made to his teſtimony.

I. I will lay before you the teſtimony which *John* bare of Jeſus Chriſt.

When *John* baptized the people, he exhorted them at the ſame time to believe in one who ſhould come after him, whoſe ſervant or diſciple he was not worthy to be; he told them that this perſon ſhould baptize them with the holy Ghoſt and with fire; which prediction was firſt accompliſhed at Pentecoſt, when Chriſt ſent the holy Ghoſt on his diſciples.

When

When Jeſus came to be baptized, *John* knew him, and declined to perform that office, alledging that it became not ſo conſiderable a perſon to receive baptiſm from him. After Chriſt was baptized, the holy Ghoſt deſcended upon him, and God by a voice from heaven declared him to be his beloved Son. This *John* ſaw and teſtified, and added that God had revealed to him that this was he who ſhould baptize with the holy Ghoſt.

When the prieſts and *Levites* came to ask *John* who he was, he declared that he was not the Meſſias, but his forerunner, and the perſon foretold by *Iſaias*; and he told them that the Meſſias was at hand, and would ſoon manifeſt himſelf.

After this *John* took all opportunities of making Jeſus known to his own diſciples and to the *Jews*. He calls him *the Lamb of God who taketh away the ſins of the world*: He ſays of him; *This is he of whom I ſpake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me, for he was before me*; that is, though he was born after me, and enters into his office after me, yet he is before me both in dignity and time.

After-

Afterwards, when Jeſus was baptizing the *Jews* by his diſciples, and many reſorted to him, the diſciples of *John*, jealous of the honour of their maſter, complained to him that Jeſus drew away the people to himſelf, and took upon him the office of baptizing them. Upon this *John* with great ſincerity and modeſty declared how much he was inferior to Chriſt: He reminded them how often he had ſaid that he was not the Meſſias, but his forerunner, he told them that his office would ſoon expire, and that Chriſt, who then began to appear, ſhould obſcure his glory, which was to him a cauſe of joy, not of envy; he told them that Chriſt was the beloved Son of God, ſent by him and receiving from him the holy Spirit without meaſure, to reſide upon him at all times, and to direct him in all things; that therefore whoſoever believed on him ſhould have everlaſting life, and whoſoever rejected him ſhould not ſee life, but the wrath of God would abide upon him.

Thus is *John* the Baptiſt a witneſs of Chriſt, of his office and dignity; he calls Chriſt the Son of God, and the redeemer of the world, he affirms that he had a being

before

before he appeared on the earth, that he came from God to teach men the way to obtain eternal life; he aſſerts that he ſaw the Spirit deſcend upon him, and heard the voice from heaven which declared him the Son of God. He ſays that God, who had ſent him to baptize, had revealed to him that Jeſus was the Meſſias, having told him by what ſigns he might diſtinguiſh and know him.

II. To ſhew what opinion we ought to entertain of *John*, I proceed, in the ſecond place, to give ſome account of his life and character.

The circumſtances attending his birth are related at large by St. *Luke*. I ſhall not recite them at preſent, but only obſerve that from them it manifeſtly appears that he was deſigned by Providence for great purpoſes. All men, as we are told, were aſtoniſhed at thoſe things, and great expectations were raiſed concerning a child ſo favoured of heaven.

One reaſon why his birth was accompanied with many extraordinary events, ſeems to have been this.

Our

Our Lord has given an illuſtrious teſtimony to his merit, He ſays that he was a burning and a ſhining light, that he was a prophet, and more than a prophet, that amongſt thoſe who were born of women there had not ariſen a greater than he. Yet, great as he was, in this he was inferior to many of the prophets, and to the diſciples of Chriſt, that he wrought no miracles. This power was withholden from him, that the difference between the Meſſias and his forerunner might manifeſtly appear, and Chriſt alone might poſſeſs that honour.

But that the *Jews* might not be tempted to entertain any prejudice againſt him, and to think him an inconſiderable perſon, becauſe he wrought no miracles, other ſingular marks of divine favour were beſtowed upon him: his coming was foretold by the ancient prophets, and declared by an Angel, at a time when his parents were ſtricken in years; and other miraculous circumſtances concurred to recommend him to the eſteem of the people.

He dwelt in the hill-country of *Judæa*, in a place remote from the reſort and the corruption of the world, till he appeared in his

his miniſtry, and came near *Jordan* and *Jeruſalem*, preaching the approach of the Meſſias. His life was auſtere and mortified, as his dreſs and food ſhewed; he came neither eating nor drinking, as Jeſus ſaid of him, upon which account ſome of the *Phariſees*, whom no behaviour could pleaſe, ſaid that he had a devil. He flattered not the *Jews*, he ſpake to them as one having authority, he rebuked them for their faults; he exhorted them to the exerciſe of piety towards God, of juſtice and mercy in their dealings with each other. * Great multitudes came to him, confeſſed their ſins, and received

* Though the ſucceſs of the miniſtry of *John* had been leſs than it was, yet might he not improperly be ſaid *to turn the hearts*, &c. and πάντα ἀποκαθιςᾶν, as he did all that was neceſſary for it. Verbs active ſometimes ſignify a deſign and endeavour to perform a thing, whether it be accompliſhed or not. See *Le Clerc* and *Whitby* on *Mark* ix. 12, 13. and *Grotius* on *Theſſ.* II II. 4.

Non ſi trecenis, quotquot eunt dies,
Amice, places illacrimabilem
Plutona tauris. *Horace* Carm. II. 14.

That is *placare tentes.*

Talibus Æneas ardentem et torva tuentem
Lenibat dictis animum, lacrimaſque ciebat.
Virgil Æn. VI. 467.

That

received baptiſm of him as a ſign of their repentance; and ſuch was the opinion which they had of him upon account of his ſanctity and ſelf-denial, that, though he wrought no miracles, they believed and acknowledged him to be a prophet, and thought that poſſibly he might be the Meſſias.

There were ſome of the *Jews* who joined themſelves to him, and became his diſciples. We find them mention'd in the New Teſtament, their frequent faſts, the jealouſy which they had of Chriſt, and their fears that he ſhould leſſen the reputation of their maſter.

The virtue of *John*, too great for the age in which he lived, and the eſteem which the people had for him, were the occaſion of his death. *Herod*, whom he had reproved, being offended at the freedom which he had taken, and probably ſuſpecting him on account of his popularity, had thoughts of

That is, *lenire tentabat*; for his endeavour was vain. By the way, *torva tuentem lenibat animum* is a ſtrange expreſſion. Perhaps it ſhould be *animam*, the ſhade or ghoſt of *Dido*.

Εἴ τις σε τὸν δίκαιον αὐτίκ' ἐνθάδε
Κτείνοι παραστὰς, πότερα πυνθάνοι' ἂν εἰ
Πατήρ σ' καίνων, ἢ τίνοι' ἂν ἐυθέως;

Εἴ τις σε κτείνοι, *if any one ſhould attempt to kill you.*
Sophocles Oed. Col. 1047.

killing

killing him; but at the ſame time he feared that the people would reſent it, and ſtill retained ſome remains of reſpect for him. Whilſt he was thus in ſuſpenſe, having promiſed the daughter of *Herodias* to give her any thing that ſhe could ask, at her requeſt he beheaded him. Thus the Baptiſt having performed his office, died ſoon after Chriſt had begun his miniſtry. God took him then to himſelf, as an * ancient Chriſtian writer has obſerved, that the people might no longer be divided between him and Chriſt, but might the more readily follow the Meſſias.

The reputation of this prophet ended not with his life; the people continued to honour his memory, in ſo much that when *Herod* had loſt an army by a great overthrow, the *Jews*, as † *Joſephus* informs us, ſaid that it was a divine judgment, and a juſt puniſhment inflicted upon him for putting *John* to death.

* Οἶμαι δὲ καὶ διὰ τοῦτο συγχωρηθῆναι τὴν τελευτὴν Ἰωάννου ταχίστην γενέσθαι, ὥστε πᾶσαν τοῦ πλήθους τὴν διάθεσιν ἐπὶ τὸν Χριστὸν μετελθεῖν, καὶ μηκέτι ταῖς περὶ ἀμφοτέρων ἑαυτοὺς σχίζεσθαι γνώμαις· *Chryſoſt.* in *Joan. Hom.* XXVIII.

† *Antiq.* XVIII. 7.

III. I proceed to ſhew, thirdly, that the teſtimony of *John* the Baptiſt ought to be received.

He affirms that he knew Jeſus to be the Meſſias, and this knowledge he acquires not by any obſervations which he had made upon the life and behaviour of Chriſt, nor from comparing his actions with the propheſies relating to the Meſſias; for at the time that he firſt gave his teſtimony, Chriſt had not diſcovered his divine miſſion, and was juſt entering into his office; nor does it appear that Chriſt had declared any thing of it to him, or any way endeavoured to perſuade him that he was the Meſſias. He is not guided by conjectures, but by ſure and convincing evidence, by immediate divine revelation, and by a voice from heaven declaring Chriſt to be the Son of God. He aſſures us that God who had ſeparated him from his mother's womb for his own ſervice, and who had ſent him to go before the Meſſias and prepare his way, had alſo diſcovered to him that Chriſt was that perſon.

His record therefore depends upon his veracity, and his veracity appears unqueſtionable. Many circumſtances concur to add weight

weight and authority to his teſtimony, and to remove all ſuſpicion of enthuſiaſm and impoſture.

For, from the obſervations which have been already made on *John* the Baptiſt, on the teſtimony which he gave, and on the manner in which he gave it, from theſe we may diſcover the character of a great and a good man. We ſee in him auſterity of life, ſelf denial, contempt of the pleaſures and vanities of the world, an active yet diſcreet zeal, a courage and conſtancy ariſing from true piety, and a ſincere modeſty and humility. He flattered not the *Phariſees* and *Sadducees* who came to his baptiſm, but told them that they were great ſinners; he aſſumed no honours which belonged not to him; he ſaid leſs of himſelf than he might have ſaid with truth, when the *Jews* ſent meſſengers to ask him whether he were the Meſſias, or ſome prophet. His diſciples were probably good men, but they had an imprudent regard for him, and for their own credit, as they were his followers, and therefore they feared that Chriſt would draw all men after him, and leſſen the reputation of their maſter; but he was not to be moved

by ſuch improper motives, nor did he ceaſe to bear teſtimony to Chriſt, and to acknowledge his own inferiority. He was appointed of God to exhort and reprove with all authority; and this office he performed towards *Herod*, though he could not be ignorant of the danger to which he expoſed himſelf in telling diſagreeable truths to a wicked prince. By his blameleſs and upright behaviour he gained the reſpect and eſteem of the *Jews*, bad as they were; and after his death, the hiſtorian before named, who ſeems to have had no temptation to be partial to his memory, did juſtice to his character, and recorded his virtues, and the impreſſion which they made on the minds of the people.

He was a man who practiſed the auſterities of a mortified life, who rejected even innocent pleaſures, and appeared ſeverely virtuous, who exhorted all men to righteouſneſs, and lived ſuitably to his own doctrines. He could not act this part with a view to any worldly profit, and to enrich himſelf: he ſought no ſuch advantages, and if he had ſought them, he would never have obtained them by ſuch methods, by pretending

tending to ſlight them, by dwelling in the wilderneſs, and by exhorting men to virtues, of which if he had not ſet them an example, he would have been greatly deſpiſed. Nothing therefore can be thought to have influenced him unleſs religion, or vanity and the love of fame. If he was guided by ambition, he had reaſon to be ſatisfied with his ſucceſs: all *Jeruſalem* was moved at his preaching, and the people reſorted to him, receiving his inſtructions and his baptiſm, and confeſſing their ſins. They had ſo great an opinion of him, that they thought him certainly one ſent from God; perhaps one of the old prophets returned into the world, perhaps the Meſſias himſelf. What uſe did he make of this favourable diſpoſition of the people? He ſpake of himſelf with much lowlineſs and modeſty, and exhorted them to acknowledge Chriſt as the Meſſias. If he had been a proud and ambitious man, he would not have ſet Jeſus above himſelf, he would at leaſt have been ſilent, and have left the *Jews* to judge for themſelves.

We may then affirm that he was, what he ſeemed to be, a good man, and a lover of truth; and that he would not have de-

ceived the people in any caſe, above all, not in a caſe ſo important. He decided a queſtion not of ſmall conſequence, but concerning the Meſſias, whom the prophets had foretold, whoſe coming was then expected, to whom the nation was bound to pay obedience, who ſhould in ſome ſenſe be a ruler, and a deliverer, and the founder of an everlaſting kingdom. If we ſuppoſe him capable of deceiving the *Jews* in this affair, we muſt ſuppoſe him wicked to the higheſt degree, one who feared not God, nor regarded man; who endeavoured to lead into a fatal error his own nation by which he was honoured and reſpected. But it is unreaſonable to ſuppoſe him guilty of ſo foul a crime.

We may alſo conclude that he would not have born teſtimony to one whom he did not well know to be the Meſſias, becauſe common prudence would have kept him from throwing away ſo fooliſhly his good name and reputation. The character of the Meſſias could not be long perſonated by the moſt artful impoſtor. He was to be a teacher of truth and righteouſneſs, in him the propheſies were to be accompliſhed, by

him

him many miracles were to be performed. If therefore *John* had directed the *Jews* to a falſe Meſſias, to one in whom none of theſe characters appeared, his fraud or his error would have been diſcovered, he would have expoſed himſelf to the puniſhment which a falſe prophet deſerved, at leaſt he would have loſt the eſteem and favour of the *Jews*, and the fair and unblemiſhed reputation which till then he had preſerved, and been the object of their contempt and hatred. Nothing can make us ſuſpect that he would have acted a part ſo inconſiſtent and extravagant, or hinder us from believing that he ſpake as he was directed by the Spirit of God.

Nor is it leſs evident that he acted on this occaſion by no motives of intereſt or partiality. It was of no advantage to him: on the contrary, he ſaw, what his diſciples ſaw, that if Chriſt were acknowledged to be the Meſſias, he would be no longer followed and admired. Nor can we ſuppoſe him partial out of friendſhip; for there appears not to have been any intimacy between him and Chriſt. We may obſerve that *John* was a perſon of eminent virtue, that he had born

witneſs to Chriſt, that he was related to him, and that upon all theſe accounts he ſeemed to deſerve diſtinguiſhing marks of his favour. Yet Chriſt, as far as we can learn from the Evangeliſts, ſeldom converſed with him; the reaſon of which probably was, that the teſtimony of *John* might appear of the more weight, when none could ſuſpect him prejudiced for his friend and his relation.

But ſtill it may be alledged againſt his teſtimony, that he was an enthuſiaſt. Some of the *Jews* in the days of our Saviour ſaid that *John* the Baptiſt had loſt his ſenſes, becauſe they had nothing elſe to ſay againſt him. The accuſation is groundleſs; his diſcourſes and his reputation ſufficiently confute it; his prophetic character proves it to be falſe. He foretold the appearing of the Meſſias, the calamities which ſhould befall the unconverted *Jews*, the death of Chriſt, and the deſcent of the holy Ghoſt. Enthuſiaſm may make a man fancy extraordinary communications with the deity, and it may lead him to auſterities and ſelf-denial; but it will not enable him to declare future events.

IV. I ſhall, in the laſt place, endeavour to remove an objection which may be offered againſt the teſtimony of *John*.

It is related in the New Teſtament that *John*, when he was in priſon, hearing of the miracles of Chriſt, ſent two of his diſciples to him, ſaying, *Art thou he that ſhould come, or look we for another?* Hence it may be objected that ſince *John* at the latter end of his life * doubted whether Jeſus were the Meſſias, the force of the teſtimony which he bare before is greatly weakned, and he may be ſuppoſed to have changed his opinion, and, as far as we find, to have died uncertain what to think upon this affair.

In anſwer to this objection I would obſerve;

Firſt, that the Evangeliſts, who have recorded the teſtimony which *John* bare of Jeſus Chriſt, have alſo preſerved the doubtful meſſage which he ſent to our Lord, and which may ſeem to leſſen the ſtrength of his former teſtimony. This is one inſtance,

* Tertullian thinks that *John* really doubted, *Adverſ. Marcion.* IV. 18. *De Præſcr. Hæret.* 8. and *Le Clerc* inclines to the ſame opinion.

amongſt

amongſt many more, of their ſincerity in repreſenting the truth without diſguiſe.

Secondly; *John* the Baptiſt at the beginning of his miniſtry, declared that Chriſt was the Meſſias, and afterwards, when he was in priſon he heard of the miraculous works done by Chriſt, which tended to confirm him in his firſt opinion. If at that time he began to grow doubtful, the only imaginable cauſe of his doubts muſt have been this, that Chriſt appeared not as a temporal prince, to free him from his bonds and the *Jews* from their ſervitude. Since then his doubts, if he had any, muſt have ariſen from his wrong apprehenſions of the nature of Chriſt's kingdom, and of the happineſs which the ſervants of the Meſſias ſhould enjoy, they will never invalidate the teſtimony which he had ſo often born to Chriſt, and the revelation made to him, upon which his teſtimony was founded.

Thirdly; the words of *John* the Baptiſt, taken in their obvious ſenſe, imply a doubt whether Chriſt were the Meſſias; but almoſt all expoſitors agree in thinking that he had no doubts about it, and that he ſent not this meſſage for his own information, becauſe

John,

John, as himſelf aſſerts, knew Chriſt to be the Meſſias by divine revelation, and becauſe he heard that Chriſt manifeſted his power by miracles, and had fulfilled that part of his character. They endeavour therefore to aſſign ſome other reaſon why he propoſed this queſtion to Chriſt.

The moſt common opinion is, that he propoſed it for the information of his diſciples, hoping that Chriſt would ſatisfy them by his anſwer, and perhaps by working miracles before them, and that they would at laſt lay aſide their prejudices and join themſelves to Chriſt.

But there is another opinion, leſs followed indeed, and yet more probable, which is, that as the *Jews* in general, and the diſciples of Chriſt, ſo alſo *John* and his diſciples expected a temporal reign of the Meſſias, and that they wondered why Jeſus, who at that time wrought many miracles, did not deliver *John* out of the hands of his enemies.

He of all perſons ſeemed moſt to deſerve ſuch favour and protection. He was ſeparated from his mother's womb, and appointed by divine providence to be the forerunner of the Meſſias, to be the laſt and

the

the moſt honoured of all the prophets who came before Chriſt; he was ſent to bear teſtimony to him, and to prepare the world to receive him; and this office he had faithfully fulfilled; he was related to Chriſt, and in virtue had no ſuperior amongſt the *Jews*: he was now in bonds for the ſake of righteouſneſs, and his life depended upon the will of a wicked prince who was exaſperated againſt him. Being in theſe circumſtances and hearing of Chriſt's miracles, he ſends two diſciples to him, and bids them ſay; *Art thou he that ſhould come, or look we for another?* In which words we may ſuppoſe that he indirectly beſought his aſſiſtance; as if he had ſaid:

If thou art the Meſſias, why am I confined in priſon? why may I not enjoy with thy diſciples the pleaſure of ſeeing him, whoſe coming I proclaimed, appear in his glory? It will caſt ſome reproach upon thee, if thy forerunner be left to periſh. The miſerable find daily relief from thy miracles; add one in favour of me, and deliver me, for thou canſt not want power.

It is true that *John* was filled with the holy Ghoſt, and had better notions of Chriſt than

ſlian perhaps any of Chriſt's diſciples entertained before the reſurrection of their maſter. This we may conclude from the things which he ſpake of Chriſt's power and dignity, and of the end for which he came into the world. He calls him *the Lamb of God that taketh away the ſins of the world*, which might incline us to imagine that he knew Chriſt ſhould ſuffer and be a ſacrifice for ſin. But it is not improbable that tho' by revelation he knew in general that Chriſt would ſave from their ſins thoſe who ſhould believe in him, yet he knew not how he would effect it; that the particulars concerning the ſufferings and death of Chriſt were not diſcovered to him, and that both he and the prophets before him might foretell things of the Meſſias which they did not fully underſtand.

Laſtly; there remains another ſolution of this difficulty to which ſome may perhaps give the preference.

John, for the reaſons already mentioned, could not well doubt whether the perſon, whom he had baptized and to whom he had born teſtimony, were the Meſſias; but being in priſon, and hearing the fame of Chriſt's

Chriſt's miracles, he wanted to be ſatisfied of two things, whether Jeſus were that very perſon whom he had baptized and proclaimed, and whether the rumour concerning his miracles were true. He ſends therefore his diſciples, and bids them ask Chriſt if he were the expected Meſſias, and bring him an account of all that paſſed upon that occaſion, that by Chriſt's anſwer and their report, he might form a ſurer judgment.

But, whether *John* had or had not any doubts at the time when he ſent the meſſage, thus much is highly probable, that after the return of his diſciples, he and they were fully ſatisfied, firſt, becauſe Chriſt's anſwer and miracles were ſufficient to convince any wiſe and good man, and ſecondly, becauſe St. *Matthew* relates that when *John* was beheaded, *his diſciples came and took up the body and buried it, and went and told Jeſus*; which was plainly an act of reſpect and kindneſs, and the behaviour of men who entertained an honourable opinion of Chriſt.

VI. *The*

VI.

The Scriptures of the New Teſtament.

THE following obſervations relate to the truth, the importance, and the authority of the Scriptures of the New Teſtament.

I. The books of the New Teſtament were written by thoſe to whom they are aſcribed, that is, * by Apoſtles, or by believers

* Ἐν τοῖς νόθοις κατατετάχθω καὶ τῶν Παύλου πράξεων ἡ γραφὴ, ὅ, τε λεγόμενος Ποιμὴν, καὶ ἡ ἀποκάλυψις Πέτρου· καὶ πρὸς τούτοις, ἡ φερομένη Βαρνάβα Ἐπιστολὴ, καὶ τῶν Ἀποστόλων αἱ λεγομέναι διδαχαί. *Pro ſpuriis habendi ſunt etiam Actus Pauli, et liber Paſtoris titulo inſcriptus, et Revelatio Petri: Barnabæ item Epiſtola, et quæ dicuntur Inſtitutiones Apoſtolorum.* Euſebius E. H. III. 25. Where *Euſebius* by the word νόθοις cannot poſſibly mean leſs than that theſe books were of ambiguous and conteſted authority. See *Valeſius.*

The *Epiſtle* of BARNABAS is extant, and is ſufficiently illuſtrated by learned men. Peruſe him; —— *he ſhall ſpeak for himſelf.*

In

lievers who lived and converſed with the Apoſtles. Of this we have as clear proof as

In the APOSTOLICAL CONSTITUTIONS we find the following paſſage, VI. 24. *It has pleaſed God that the law of righteouſneſs ſhould not only be publiſhed by us,* [the Apoſtles] *but that it ſhould be made conſpicuous and illuſtrious by the* Romans; *for they alſo believing in the Lord have forſaken their idolatry and iniquity, and ſhew favour to the righteous, and puniſh the wicked; but they have the* Jews *for tributaries, and ſuffer them not to exerciſe their own laws and ordinances.* Οὐ μόνον δὲ τῆς δικαιοσύνης νόμον δι' ἡμῶν ἐπιδείκνυσθαι ἐθέλεσαι, ἀλλὰ καὶ διὰ Ῥωμαίων εὐδόκησεν αὐτὸν φαίνεσθαι καὶ λάμπειν· καὶ γὰρ καὶ ἔτοι πιστεύσαντες ἐπὶ τὸν Κύριον, καὶ πολυθεΐας ἀπέστησαν καὶ ἀδικίας· καὶ τοὺς ἀγαθοὺς ἀποδέχονται, καὶ τοὺς φαύλους κολάζουσιν· Ἰουδαίους δὲ ὑποφόρους ἔχουσι, καὶ τοῖς ἰδίοις δικαιώμασιν οὐκ ἐῶσι κεχρῆσθαι. I leave it to others to ſettle the time when this was written.

Concerning the SHEPHERD of HERMAS, it is obſervable that the perſons who act in it are moſt of them *allegorical* perſons and *ideal* beings, ſuch as appear in the *Table* of *Cebes*, and in the *Hercules* of *Prodicus Ceus*. An ancient Lady converſes with him, and tells him that ſhe is the *Church* of God. Afterwards ſeveral virgins come and diſcourſe with him, and when he wants to know who they are, he is told by the *Shepherd-Angel*, that they are *Faith*, *Abſtinence*, *Patience*, *Chaſtity*, *Concord*, &c.

There is a great conformity between *Hermas* and the author of the ſecond book of *Apocryphal Eſdras*; for a Woman converſes with *Eſdras*, who, as the Angel tells him, was *Sion*, or the *Jewiſh* Church; and as in the ſame book the Woman vaniſhes away, and in her place appears a City; ſo in *Hermas* the Church is repreſented to him under the image of a Tower.

The

as the nature of the thing can admit, or any reaſonable perſon can deſire, namely the teſti-

The Prophets ſometimes beheld, but it was in *tranſient* viſion, ſuch kind of perſons. *Zechariah* ſaw *Wickedneſs* in the ſhape of a woman, ch. v. and St. *John* viewed *Death* and *Hades* Rev. vi. 18. and the *Church* appearing as a woman, *Rev.* xii. 1. and *Babylon* as a harlot, *Rev.* xvii. 3.

It is related in *Cyprian*, Epiſt. 39. *Edit. Oxon.* that the *Church* appeared in a viſion, or dream, *in viſione per noctem*, to *Celerinus*, and commanded him to receive the office of *Reader*, which he in humility had declined. Add to this that St. *John*, in his *ſecond Epiſt.* calls the Church *the Elect Lady* by a *proſopopœia*, as ſome interpreters think; but the contrary opinion is more probable.

Afterwards III. 9. *Hermas* tells us that the Church which appeared to him was *the Son of God.* The Apoſtles repreſent Chriſt as the head, the bridegroom, the husband of the Church.

Hermas ſeems to have had ſome literature, for though his ſubject did not lead him to ſhew any learning, he accidentally diſcovers a little of it. He makes the Angel ſay, ὅσον ἔτι αἱ αὐλῶν, ὡς νέων, φρένες ἠερέθονται. *Patr. Apoſt.* Ed. Cler. p. 80. The Angel alludes plainly to *Homer*, Il. Γ. 108.

Ἀιεὶ δ' ὁπλοτέρων ἀνδρῶν φρένες ἠερέθονται.

Again, p. 99. he makes him ſay; *Vide ſtillicidium, quod cavat lapidem.* So. *Lucretius* I.

Stillicidi caſus lapidem cavat.

But this thought is indeed very trite and obvious.

In the parable of the *Elm* and the *Vine*, p. 104. the Angel ſays; *Vitis hæc, niſi applicita fuerit ulmo, non poteſt*

 multum

teſtimony of all antiquity, of all the Chriſtian writers who lived in or near thoſe times.

II. The

multum fructum facere. Jacens enim in terrâ, &c. which is very like the ſpeech of *Vertumnus* in *Ovid*, Met. XIV.

Ulmus erat contra ſpatioſa tumentibus uvis:
Quam ſocia poſtquam pariter cum vite probavit;
At ſi ſtaret, ait cœlebs ſine palmite truncus,
Nil præter frondes, quare peteretur, haberet.
Hæc quoque, quæ juncta vitis requieſcit in ulmo,
Si non nupta foret, terræ adclinata jaceret.

The *firſt Epiſtle* of CLEMENS is in the main a good piece, and not unworthy of an Apoſtolical Father, though it has a few ſmall ſpots, and poſſibly, as *Edw. Bernard* and ſome others think, a few interpolations.

The ſame may be ſaid of *the ſecond Epiſtle* of *Clemens*, if it be his. There is indeed a quotation at the end of it from the *Goſpel according to the Ægyptians*, which might as well have been omitted, and which perhaps was added by another hand.

This Epiſtle begins thus; Ἀδελφοὶ, οὕτως δεῖ ἡμᾶς φρονεῖν περὶ Ἰησοῦ, ὡς περὶ Θεοῦ, ὡς περὶ κριτοῦ ζώντων καὶ νεκρῶν· καὶ οὐ δεῖ ἡμᾶς μικρὸν φρονεῖν περὶ τῆς σωτηρίας ἡμῶν· ἐν τῷ γὰρ φρονεῖν ἡμᾶς μικρὸν περὶ αὐτοῦ, μικρὸν καὶ ἐλπίζομεν λαβεῖν. *Fratres, ita ſentire nos oportet de Jeſu Chriſto, tanquam de Deo, tanquam de judice vivorum et mortuorum; nec decet nos humilia ſentire de ſalute noſtrâ: dum enim humiliter ſentimus de illo, parva etiam accepturos nos ſperamus.* I quote this place, becauſe it wants emendation, and ſhould be corrected thus; —— ὃ δεῖ ἡμᾶς μικρὸν φρονεῖν περὶ τοῦ ἀρχηγοῦ τῆς σωτηρίας ἡμῶν· *nec decet nos humilia ſentire de* auctore *ſalutis noſtræ.* This not only makes better ſenſe, and agrees better with περὶ αὐτοῦ which follows it, but alludes to the

Epiſtle

II. The main parts of the Chriſtian religion, enough, I mean, to eſtabliſh the truth of it, may be found in almoſt each ſingle book or treatiſe contained in the New Teſtament.

Take any of the Goſpels, or the Acts of the Apoſtles, or the * Revelation, or any of

Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, of which *Clemens* is obſerved to make frequent uſe in his unconteſted Epiſtle. *Hebr.* ii. 10. τὸν ἀρχηγὸν τῆς σωτηρίας αὐτῶν.

The writer of this Epiſtle ſeems, in the place which I have quoted, to have had in view the *Ebionites*, πτωχῶς καὶ ταπεινῶς τὰ περὶ τὸν Χριστὸν δοξάζοντας. λιτὸν μὲν γὰρ αὐτὸν καὶ κοινὸν ἡγεῖτο, κατὰ προκοπὴν ἤθους αὐτὸ μόνον ἄνθρωπον δεδικαιωμένον —— *qui humiliter admodum et abjectè de Chriſto ſentirent. Eum enim ſimplicem ac vulgarem, nec aliud quam hominem eſſe cenſebant, qui profectu virtutis juſtus factus fuiſſet.* Euſeb. E. H. III. 27.

Clemens, in his firſt Epiſtle, VI. p. 151. *Patr. Apoſt.* ſays; Ζῆλος καὶ ἔρις πόλεις μεγάλας κατέσεισεν, καὶ ἔθνη μεγάλα ἐξερρίζωσεν, alluding, perhaps, to *Horace:*

Iræ Thyeſten exitio gravi
Stravere, et altis urbibus ultimæ
Stetere cauſſæ cur perirent
Funditus ——.

The ſpurious books under the names of Apoſtles are not altogether uſeleſs. They ſhew that the Forgers in thoſe days were men of poor abilities, and by their deformity they ſerve to ſet off the writings of the Apoſtles.

* *Dionyſius Alexandrinus* held the *Revelation* to be a ſacred book, but was of opinion that it was not written by

of the Epiſtles, two or three excepted, and, if they be allowed to be genuine, and to give

the Apoſtle St. *John*, and that the language and manner of compoſition ſhewed it to be of another perſon. His reaſons may be ſeen in *Euſebius* E. H. VII. 25. It muſt be owned that there is a difference of ſtyle between the *Revelation* and the *Goſpel*, of which I could give proofs, if it were needful; but the ſubject is alſo different. *Il ne faut pas s'étonner que l'air de l'Apocalypſe ſoit different de celui qu'on remarque dans les autres écrits de S. Jean, parceque la matiere en eſt extremement differente. Pour la langue, outre les autres raiſons qu'on en pourroit rendre, ne peut on pas dire qu'eſtant relegué a Patmos, il n'avoit pas auprés de lui les meſmes perſonnes qu'il avoit a Epheſe pour ſe faire aider dans le choix des termes et des expreſſions? Et peuteſtre meſme que la chaleur de l'Eſprit de Dieu le preſſoit d'écrire promtement ce qu'il avoit vu, ſans ſonger à une pureté et à une elegance qui n'eſt rien au tout devant Dieu.* Tillemont *Mem. Eccl.* T. I. *S. Jean. Not.* 9. *Tillemont*'s conjecture is founded on a ſuppoſition which ſeveral perſons will not admit, namely, that St. *John* wrote his Revelation at *Patmos*.

They who think, with Sir *Iſaac Newton*, that St. *John* wrote the Revelation long before the Goſpel, may ſuppoſe that the Apoſtle, when he compoſed the Goſpel, had improved his ſtyle by converſing with the *Greeks* of *Aſia Minor*.

But, beſides ancient teſtimony, there is alſo *internal* reaſon to conclude that the Goſpel, and the Revelation are the work of the ſame author:

Thus; *John* alone calls Chriſt Λόγος, *the Word*, in the beginning of the Goſpel, and in *Revel.* xix. 13.

John alone records that the Baptiſt called Chriſt *the Lamb of God*, alone applies to him the direction concerning the

give a true account of the things which they relate, the Chriſtian religion muſt be * acknowledged to be fully confirmed.

III. The

the Paſchal lamb, *a bone of him ſhall not be broken,* alone deſcribes him as *the Lamb.* Revel. v. 6.

John makes great uſe of the words, λόγος, φῶς ἀληθινὸν, ἀλήθεια, μάρτυς, ὁ ἀληθινὸς, μαρτυρῶ, ζωὴ, ἀγάπη, ἀγαπῶ, in thoſe writings which are aſcribed to him.

John alone quotes, *They ſhall look on him whom they pierced,* in the Goſp. xix. 37. and *Revel.* i. 7.

John alone relates that a ſoldier pierced the ſide of Chriſt, and that blood and water came forth, xix. 34. and alludes to it, Epiſt. I. v. 6. as ſome Commentators ſuppoſe.

Rev. xxi. 27. Καὶ οὐ μὴ εἰσέλθῃ εἰς αὐτὴν πᾶν κοινὸν καὶ ποιῶν βδέλυγμα ——

κοινὸν & ποιῶν are *neuters* put for *maſculines,* as in the Goſp. vi. 37. πᾶν ὃ δίδωσί μοι ὁ Πατὴρ, πρὸς ἐμὲ ἥξει. *Grotius.*

Rev. xxii. 14. ἔσται ἡ ἐξουσία αὐτῶν ἐπὶ τὸ ξύλον τῆς ζωῆς. — ἐξουσία, *jus,* as in the Goſp. I. 12. ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς ἐξουσίαν τέκνα Θεοῦ γενέσθαι. *Grot.*

Rev. xxii. 2. ἐντεῦθεν καὶ ἐντεῦθεν. The ſame expreſſion is found in the Goſp. xix. 18. Some MSS. have in the Rev. ἐντεῦθεν καὶ ἐκεῖθεν, but it ſeems to be an alteration quite unneceſſary. *Ariſtot.* quoted in *Conſtant. Lexic.* ἔνθεν καὶ ἔνθεν τῆς ἀκάνθης. *Herodotus* II. 176. ὁ μὲν ἔνθεν, ὁ δ' ἔνθεν τοῦ μεγάρου. *Sophocles* Ajac. 731. —— ὀνείδεσιν Ἡσσασον ἔνθεν κἄνθεν. Nothing is more common than ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα. *Hinc et hinc* is found in *Virgil* and other poets, and often in *Seneca*'s *Tragedies.*

* In ſcripturâ Novi Teſtamenti, imo in ſolis libris Lucæ et Joannis ea continentur, quæ cuivis Chriſtiano, cognitu, ſperatu, factu ſunt neceſſaria; quia hoc ſibi fuiſſe propoſi-

 tum,

III. The books of the New Teſtament have deſcended to us uncorrupted in any thing material. This appears evidently from the quotations which have been made out of them by Chriſtian writers in all ages, from the high eſteem and veneration in which they have ever been held, from the multitude of copies and early tranſlations, which left no room to fraud or inattention to do them any important injury, and from the various readings themſelves, which, for the moſt part, are of ſmall conſequence.

IV. The truth of the things contained in theſe books depends upon the integrity of the Apoſtles, who did and endured ſo much for the ſake of the Goſpel. The good character of the Apoſtles is confirmed by the teſtimony of thoſe many thouſands who were converted by them; and the innocence and patience and great ſufferings of theſe primitive Chriſtians may be confirmed by the teſtimony of *Pagan* authors, and cannot with any ſhew of reaſon be denied.

tum, alter in præfatione, alter in concluſione operis profitentur. Sed præter hæc multa ſunt ſcitu utilia, multa ad regimen Eccleſiæ etiam neceſſaria. *Grotius* Annot. ad Conſ. Caſs. p. 628.

V. There

V. There never was a book which abounded more with internal proofs of the truth of its contents than the New Teſtament. A ſpirit of piety, charity, and diſintereſtedneſs appears through the whole. The Evangeliſts, when they relate the ſame things, differ or ſeem to differ in ſmall circumſtances; they ingenuouſly confeſs the misbehaviour of the Apoſtles upon ſome occaſions; they have ſometimes recorded * what the ſmalleſt degree of craft and diſſimulation would have taught them to ſuppreſs; they enter into a large and accurate detail of places, times, perſons, and events, in which if they had mixed fraud and falſhood, it might eaſily have been detected.

Of all the proofs which the New Teſtament carries in it ſelf of its truth, there are few ſtronger than thoſe which may be taken from the diſcourſes of Jeſus Chriſt.

Eminent men are obſerved to have uſually a ſtyle of their own. Whoſoever ex-

* A ſtatuary works upon marble, an hiſtorian upon facts: both cut them to their fancy, and pare off all that will not ſerve for their purpoſe. The Writers of the New Teſtament ſtand remarkably clear from this imputation.

amines the diſcourſes of our Lord with attention, may find in them a certain character and way of ſpeaking peculiar to him. This manner, by which he may be diſtinguiſhed, conſiſts in * raiſing matter of inſtruction and moral reflection from the things which were at hand, which preſented themſelves to him and to his audience.

Hence it is that his ſermons to the people, and his converſation with his diſciples allude perpetually to the time of the year, or to the place where he was, or to the objects ſurrounding him, or to the occupation and circumſtances of thoſe to whom he addreſſed himſelf, or to the ſtate of public affairs. Of this ſeveral examples might be produced. I ſhall lay before you thoſe which may be taken out of his ſermon upon the mount.

In the ſpring, our Saviour went into the fields, and ſat down on a mountain, and made that diſcourſe which is recorded in St. *Matthew*, and which is full of obſervations ariſing from the things which offered themſelves to his ſight: for,

* In ſpeaking *pro re natâ*.

When

When he exhorted his diſciples to truſt in God, he bade them * *behold* the fowls of the air, which were then flying about them, and were fed by Divine providence, though they did not *ſow*, nor *reap*, nor *gather into barns*; he bade them take notice † of the lilies of the field, which were then blown, and were ſo beautifully clothed by the ſame power, and yet toiled not, like the husbandmen, who were then at work.

Being in a place whence they had a wide proſpect of a cultivated land, he bade them obſerve how God cauſed the ſun to ſhine and the rain to deſcend upon the fields and gardens even of the wicked and ungrateful, and he continued to convey his doctrine to them under rural images, ſpeaking of good trees and corrupt trees, of knowing men by their fruits, of wolves in ſheeps clothing, of grapes not growing upon thorns, nor figs on thiſtles, of the folly of caſting pretious things to dogs and ſwine, of ‡ good meaſure preſs'd down, and ſhaken together and running over.

* ἐμβλέψατε.

† *Solomon*, ſays he, ὃ περιεβάλετο ὡς ἓν τούτων.

‡ *Matt.* vii. 1. and *Luke* vi. 38.

Speaking

Speaking at the ſame time to people, many of whom were fiſhermen, and lived much upon fiſh, he ſays, *What man of you will give his ſon a ſerpent, if he ask a fiſh?* Therefore, when he ſaid in the ſame diſcourſe to his diſciples, *Ye are the light of the world; a city that is ſet on a hill cannot be hid*; it is probable that he * pointed to a city within their view ſituated upon the brow of a hill: And when he called them *the ſalt of the earth*, he alluded perhaps to the husbandmen who were manuring † the ground; and when he compared every perſon who obſerved his precepts to a man who built a houſe upon a rock, which ſtood firm, and every

* *A few points towards the north appears that which they call* the mount of the Beatitudes, *a ſmall riſing, from which our bleſſed Saviour delivered his Sermon. Not far from this little hill is the city* Saphet, *ſuppoſed to be the antient* Bethulia. *It ſtands upon a very eminent and conſpicuous mountain, and is ſeen far and near. May we not ſuppoſe that Chriſt alludes to this city in thoſe words*: A city ſet on a hill, &c. *Maundrell's* Journey to *Jeruſalem.*

Jeruſalem, Nazareth, &c. ſtood upon hills.

† With dung, or with aſhes, which abound with ſalts, or with which perhaps ſalt was mixed. *Sale conſperſa ſterileſcunt*, ſays Grotius, *unde loca devota et humanis ademta uſibus ſale conſpergi ſolebant.* Too much ſalt may render the earth unfruitful; but a little of it has a contrary effect; and

I am

every one who ſlighted his words to a man who built a houſe upon the ſand, which was thrown down by the winds and floods; when he uſed this compariſon, 'tis not improbable that he had before his eyes houſes ſtanding upon high ground, and houſes in the valley in a ruinous condition, which had been deſtroyed by inundations. *

From

I am told that ſalt is often uſed in manuring. Virgil *Georg.* I. 193.

Semina vidi equidem multos medicare ſerentes,
Et nitro prius, et nigra perfundere amurca,
Grandior ut fœtus ſiliquis fallacibus eſſet.

* Going from *Bethany* to *Jeruſalem*, with his diſciples, as they paſſed over a mountain, he ſaid, *If ye ſhall ſay to this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou caſt into the ſea it ſhall be done*, Matt. xxi. 21. In *Luke* xix. 12. he ſpake a parable concerning a nobleman, who went into a far country to receive a kingdom, alluding to that which had happened to *Archelaus*; *Chriſtus hanc ſuam parabolam deſumſit ex more regum ejus ævi, qui beneficio Imperatorum regnabant, potius quam jure natalitium, quales ab Herode Magno in Judæâ fuerant. Non poterant diadema ſumere, niſi juſſu eorum qui Romæ rerum potiebantur. Herodes ille longinquum iter ſuſcepit, ut regnum Judææ ab Antonio impetraret, nec fruſtra; ivit enim ex Judæa Romam, ut docet* Joſephus *Ant. Jud.* XIV. 25, 26, *atque inde,* τὴν βασιλείαν παραλαβὼν, *accepto regno, in Judæam rediit. Iterum iter ſuſcepit, ut ſibi a Cæſare regnum confirmaretur, ut idem Hiſtoricus docet* XV. 10. *Idem ſucceſſores ejus facere coacti ſunt, quod ab eo-*

dem

From theſe obſervations concerning the ſtyle and genius of our Saviour's diſcourſes, the following uſes may be made.

We

dem ſcriptore diſcere eſt XVII. 13. *Contra hoſce legationes interdum a Judæis Romam miſſæ, ut ne regnum illis conferretur, aut etiam auferretur. Sic Archelaum accuſarunt Judæi apud Cæſarem, Romæ, per legatos. Hinc intelligimus rationem, ob quam ita parabola conceptа eſt. Archelaus, exempli cauſa, erat homo* εὐγενὴς, *natus quippe ab Herode. Idem abiit in regionem longinquam* (in Italiam) *accipere ſibi regnum* (Judææ) *et reverti* (in Judæam.) *Cives vero, qui eum oderant, miſerunt legationem poſt illum, dicentes* (apud Cæſarem) *nolumus hunc regnare ſuper nos; quod non potuerunt tamen impetrare. Itaque rediit, accepto regno,* ἐθναρχίαν παραλαβὼν, *ut loquitur* Joſephus. *Deinde de inimicis, qui noluerant eum regnare ſuper ſe, gravem ultionem ſumſit.* Clericus.

When he ſays, *Luke* xxii. 25. *The kings of the Gentiles exerciſe lordſhip over them, and they that exerciſe authority upon them are called benefactors,* he alludes to the vanity of ſome wicked Princes in thoſe times, who deſerved the title of Robbers much better than of Benefactors. *Hæc fuit inanis gloria principum illius ævi, ut* εὐεργέτῶν *vel benefactorum cognomen ambirent, eo ipſo tempore, quo tyrannicè populos regebant; populique proinde adulationis cauſſâ titulum hunc in eos conferebant, aut ut levis beneficii gratiam referrent. Principes ideo urbibus congiaria dividebant, aut eas ædificiis publicis ornabant, aliaque ſimilia faciebant; nec tantum in regno ſuo, ſed etiam apud vicinos. Ita ſe geſſerat Herodes Magnus, non tantum in Judæâ et viciniâ, ſed etiam in mediâ Græcia, ut Athenis, Lacedæmone, Olympiæ, aliiſque in oppidis, ut docet Joſephus.* Bell. Jud. I. 16. *Exſtat etiamnum Athenis* —— *inſcriptio baſi ſtatuæ, ut videtur, inſculpta in honorem Berenicæ reginæ, de qua* Act. xxv. *in qua eam*

We may conclude that the writers of the Goſpels have given us always the ſubſtance, often

eam vocant Athenienſes Ἰουλίαν Βερενείκην Βασιλίσσαν μεγάλην Ἰουλίᾳ Ἀγρίππα Βασιλέως θυγατέρα, καὶ μεγάλων Βασιλέων εὐεργετῶν τῆς πόλεως ἔκγονον. *Cernitur idem titulus in nummis antiquis in multos principes collatus.*—— Clericus.

When the woman of *Samaria*, *Joh.* iv. wondered that he ſhould ask water of her, he took occaſion to repreſent his doctrine under the image of *living water*, or water which flows from a ſpring.

When he was by the ſea-ſhore, *Mat.* xiii. he ſpake three parables to the people concerning a ſower, becauſe it was then probably ſeed time, as others have obſerved.

At the time of the Paſſover, alluding to it, he ſays, *Joh.* v. 24. *He that heareth my word,* μεταβέβηκεν, *is paſſed from death unto life.* Grot.

Sir Iſaac Newton, *Obſervat. on the Propheſies* p. 148. ſays: *Chriſt and his forerunner* John, *in their parabolical diſcourſes, were wont to allude to things preſent. The old prophets, when they would deſcribe things emphatically, did not only draw parables from things which offered themſelves, as from the rent of a garment,* 1 Sam. xv. *from the ſabbatic year,* Iſai. xxxvii. *from the veſſels of a potter,* Jer. xviii. *but alſo, when ſuch objects were wanting, they ſupplied them by their own actions, as by rending a garment,* 1 Kings xi. *by ſhooting,* 2 Kings xiii. *by making bare their body,* Iſai. xx. *by impoſing ſignificant names to their ſons,* Iſai. viii. Hoſ. i. *by hiding a girdle in the banks of* Euphrates, *Jer.* xiii. *by breaking a potter's veſſel,* Jer. xix. *by putting on fetters and yokes,* Jer. xxvii. *by binding a book to a ſtone and caſting them both into* Euphrates, *Jer.* li. *by beſieging a painted city,* Ezech. iv. *by dividing their hair into three parts,* Ezech. v. *by making a chain,* Ezech. vii. *by carrying out houſhold ſtuff*

like

often the words of our Lord's ſermons. They

like a captive and trembling, Ezech. xii. *By ſuch kind of types the prophets loved to ſpeak. And Chriſt being endued with a nobler prophetic ſpirit than the reſt, excelled alſo in this kind of ſpeaking, yet ſo as not to ſpeak by his own actions, that was leſs grave and decent, but to turn into parables ſuch things as offered themſelves. On occaſion of the harveſt approaching, he admoniſhes his diſciples once and again of the ſpiritual harveſt*, John iv. 35. Mat. ix. 37. *Seeing the lilies of the field, he admoniſhes his diſciples about gay clothing*, Mat. vi. 28. *In alluſion to the preſent ſeaſon of fruits, he admoniſhes his diſciples about knowing men by their fruits*, Mat. vii. 16. *In the time of the paſſover, when trees put forth leaves, he bids his diſciples learn a parable from the fig-tree: When its branch is yet tender and putteth forth leaves, ye know that ſummer is nigh*, &c. Mat. xxiv. 32. Luke xxi. 29. *The ſame day, alluding to both the ſeaſon of the year and to his paſſion, which was to be two days after, he formed a parable of the time of the fruits approaching, and the murdering of the heir*, Mat. xxi. 33. *Alluding at the ſame time, both to the money-changers whom he had newly driven out of the temple, and to his paſſion at hand, he made a parable of a nobleman going into a far country to receive a kingdom and return, and delivering his goods to his ſervants, and at his return condemning the ſlothful ſervant, becauſe he put not his money to the exchangers*, Mat. xxv. 14. Luke xix. 12. *Being near the temple, where ſheep were kept in folds to be ſold for the ſacrifices, he ſpake many things parabolically of ſheep, of the ſhepherd, and of the door of the ſheepfold; and diſcovers that he alluded to the ſheepfolds which were to be hired in the market-place, by ſpeaking of ſuch folds as a thief could not enter by the door, nor the ſhepherd himſelf open, but a porter opened to the ſhepherd*, John x. 1. 3. *Being in the mount of Olives*, Mat. xxvi. 30.

John

They did not invent diſcourſes, and aſcribe them

John xiv. 31. *a place ſo fertile that it could not want vines, he ſpake many things myſtically of the husbandman, and of the vine and its branches,* John xv. *Meeting a blind man, he admoniſhed of ſpiritual blindneſs,* John ix. 39. *At the ſight of little children he deſcribed once and again the innocence of the elect,* Mat. xviii. 2. xix. 13. *Knowing that* Lazarus *was dead and ſhould be raiſed again, he diſcourſed of the reſurrection and life eternal,* John xi. 25, 26. *Hearing of the ſlaughter of ſome whom* Pilate *had ſlain, he admoniſhed of eternal death,* Luke xiii. 1. *To his fiſhermen he ſpake of fiſhers of men,* Mat. iv. 10. *and compoſed another parable about fiſhes,* Mat xiii. 47. *Being by the temple, he ſpake of the temple of his body,* John ii. 19. *At ſupper he ſpake a parable about the myſtical ſupper to come in the kingdom of heaven,* Luke xiv. *On occaſion of temporal food, he admoniſhed his diſciples of ſpiritual food, and of eating his fleſh and drinking his blood myſtically,* John vi. 27, 53. *When his diſciples wanted bread, he bad them beware of the leaven of the Phariſees.* Mat. xvi. 6. *Being deſired to eat, he anſwered that he had other meat,* John iv. 31. *In the great day of the feaſt of tabernacles, when the* Jews, *as their cuſtom was, brought a great quantity of waters from the river* Siloah *into the temple, Chriſt ſtood and cried, ſaying, If any man thirſt, let him come to me, and drink. He that believeth in me, out of his belly ſhall flow rivers of living water,* John vii. 37. (So alſo *Grotius*) *The next day, in alluſion to the ſervants who by reaſon of the ſabbatical year were newly ſet free, he ſaid; If ye continue in my word, the truth ſhall make you free: Which the* Jews *underſtanding literally with reſpect to the preſent manumiſſion of ſervants, anſwered, We be* Abraham's *ſeed, and were never in bondage to any man: how ſayeſt thou, ye ſhall be made free?* John viii. —— *In the laſt paſſover, when* Herod *led his army through* Judea *againſt* Aretas *king of* Arabia,

them to * him. If they had followed this method, they would probably have made for him diſcourſes exhorting to virtue and diſſuading from vice in general terms; it would not have entered into their thoughts to have crouded together ſo many alluſions to time and place, and to other little occurrences, which nothing, beſides the preſence of the objects, could ſuggeſt.

We may alſo plainly ſee in the diſcourſes of Jeſus Chriſt his great deſign, which was to inſtruct. Therefore he conveys knowledge in a familiar way, he adapts his language to his hearers, he ſpeaks to their eyes, and to their ears, he chuſes images and compariſons which would ſtrike them moſt

Arabia, *becauſe* Aretas *was the aggreſſor and the ſtronger in military forces, as appeared by the event; Chriſt alluding to that ſtate of things, compoſed the parable of a weaker king, leading his army againſt a ſtronger who made war upon him,* Luke xiv. 31. *And I doubt not but divers other parables were formed upon ſeveral occaſions, the hiſtory of which we have not.*

* As *Plato*, who is juſtly ſuppoſed to have often given his own thoughts and words to his maſter *Socrates*; and as *Greek* and *Latin* Hiſtorians never ſcrupled to do, who introduce the great men, of whom they write, making long harangues, of which they never uttered one word.

powerfully and make a laſting impreſſion upon their minds.

The words of Jeſus Chriſt being thus ſuppoſed to be genuine, we may from them not unreaſonably conclude that he was a prophet ſent from God for the benefit of mankind.

In his diſcourſes appear a profound veneration of almighty God, an earneſt deſire of promoting his honour, noble and juſt ſentiments of his power, wiſdom, goodneſs, juſtice and providence, and a ſubmiſſive reſignation to his will under great afflictions.

From them may be gathered a ſyſtem of moſt pure and ſtrict morality, the obſervance of which, as our Lord declares, would expoſe his followers to many inconveniences and much ill uſage, and ſhould not be fully recompenſed before the next ſtate.

In them is ſeen his prudence and wiſdom in expoſing ſuperſtition and hypocriſy, in inducing men to repentance ſometimes by amiable repreſentations of God's mercy, ſometimes by awful declarations of his juſtice, and in ſhunning oſtentation and applauſe.

In them appears charity, condeſcenſion, affability, love and pity to mankind.

From his diſcourſes we may conclude that his * behaviour was ſuitable to them; for if his deeds had contradicted his words, he would have been deſpiſed, and could have made no diſciples.

From his diſcourſes therefore and his behaviour, as they are recorded in the Goſpels, we may conclude that he was, as he declared himſelf to be, the Son of God. If we ſhould ſuppoſe him to have been an impoſtor and a falſe prophet, a character would ariſe full of ſuch contradiction and inconſiſtency, of ſuch prudence and folly, of ſuch knowledge and ignorance, of ſuch goodneſs and wickedneſs, as never appeared in the world before or ſince.

Another proof which the writings of the New Teſtament afford of their own autho-

* It was well obſerved by *Origen*, that amongſt the many ſlanders which had been forged and uttered againſt Jeſus by *Jews* and *Gentiles*, none had dared to accuſe him of having offended in the ſlighteſt degree againſt purity and chaſtity, and that Spite and Calumny itſelf had ſpared that part of his character. Ὃ μηδὲ οἱ μυρία καλυγορήσαντες, καὶ ψευδῆ ὅσα περὶ αὐτοῦ λέγοντες, δεδύνηνται καλεπεῖν, ὡς κἂν τὸ τυχὸν ἀκολασίας καὶν ἐπ' ὀλίγον γευσαμένου. *Contr. Cel.* III. p. 132.

rity

rity ariſes from the propheſies contained in them. We find there predictions of the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, and of the converſion of the *Gentiles* by the ſpeedy and extenſive propagation of the Goſpel.

VI. If we ſhould ſuppoſe that the writers of the New Teſtament had no extraordinary aſſiſtance from God in compoſing their books and epiſtles, the prophetic parts excepted, the truth of the Chriſtian religion in general might ſtill be proved; there would ſtill be ſufficient evidence that Chriſt came from God to teach men to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and piouſly, that he wrought miracles, that he died and roſe again, that his Apoſtles received ſupernatural powers by which they were enabled to propagate the Goſpel.

The writers of the New Teſtament were Apoſtles, or companions of the Apoſtles, who had converſed with Chriſt, who ſpent their time in converting men to the Chriſtian religion and in preſiding over the Church, who preached a more perfect morality than had been taught before, who lived ſuitably to their own doctrines, and

many of whom laid down their lives in teſtimony of the truth. Conſequently we may eſteem them honeſt men and faithful hiſtorians. But ſince an honeſt man may poſſibly miſtake, not indeed in facts which he affirms to be true upon his own knowledge, but in inferences from thoſe facts, in precepts and doctrines, or in delivering the ſentiments of others, if we can ſay no more in behalf of the writers of the New Teſtament, their authority will be only human. There ſeems wanting ſomething more than a good life and a mind purified from paſſion and prejudice to qualify them to be the firſt teachers of a new revelation, namely a Divine aſſiſtance which we call inſpiration.

How far, and in what degree the Apoſtles were inſpired, is not eaſy to determine, nor conſequently neceſſary to be known. Thus much we may affirm, that they were * aſſiſted of God to give us a faithful account of the things which we ought to be-

* Spiritus ſanctus Apoſtolos et Evangeliſtas confirmavit in doctrinâ Evangelicâ: in cæteris rebus, ut hominibus, reliquit quæ ſunt hominum. *Grotius* ad *Act.* vii. 3.

lieve,

lieve, and to perform, that we may obtain eternal life. *

For (1.) The Apoſtles had a promiſe of divine aſſiſtance upon certain occaſions. *When they deliver you up*, ſays Chriſt, *take no thought how or what ye ſhall ſpeak, for it is not ye that ſpeak, but the Spirit of your*

* The divine Providence has not judged it proper to conduct us to eternal life by operating irreſiſtibly upon our heart, or by offering invincible evidence to our underſtanding, or by ſecuring us from all miſtake, or by delivering us from all doubt. The firſt teachers of Chriſtianity were not appointed to publiſh an edition or tranſlation of the Old Teſtament which ſhould correct every little tranſpoſition, &c. which had entered into it, nor to explain every propheſy and ſolve every difficulty contained in it, nor to give a catalogue of all the ſacred books extant in their time, nor to explain ſome things which themſelves have delivered obſcurely and in part, nor to write books in which there ſhould be nothing hard to be underſtood and of uncertain ſignification. The divine Wiſdom has not judged it neceſſary to preſerve the copies of the New Teſtament from the errors of tranſcribers or tranſlators, or to raiſe up a ſucceſſion of prophets to determine the controverſies ariſing in the Church. But the great truths of natural and revealed religion, and the great duties of life, and the divine power, wiſdom and goodneſs of Jeſus Chriſt, and the miraculous and prophetic teſtimony of the holy Ghoſt, and the ſacred authority of the Apoſtles, are clearly taught in the Scriptures, and ſupported with an evidence ſufficient to ſatisfy a rational enquirer. For thoſe whom this evidence will not move, God has provided no remedy.

Father which ſpeaketh in you. Whence we may reaſon thus; If the Apoſtles were to receive from the holy Ghoſt a skill to ſpeak what was proper when they appeared in public to defend Chriſtianity, we may ſuppoſe that they were guided by the ſame Spirit in their writings; becauſe this was of greater importance, and more worthy of the Divine interpoſition. By ſpeaking juſtly they might confute ſome adverſaries, preſerve themſelves and their religion from the contempt of their hearers, and convert and confirm that part of the aſſembly which had good diſpoſitions; whereas their writings were deſigned for the ſervice not of four or five hundred men, but of all ages and nations.

(2.) Our Saviour promiſed his Apoſtles that the holy Ghoſt ſhould continually abide with them, that he ſhould lead them into all truth, and that in particular he ſhould bring to their remembrance whatſoever Chriſt had ſaid unto them; which will appear to have been neceſſary, if we conſider that the Goſpels conſiſt in a great meaſure of the diſcourſes of Chriſt, that Chriſt converſed with them at leaſt for three years, that

that they had at that time very imperfect notions of the religion which he came to teach, and of the office to which they ſhould be appointed; and that in all probability they had not * collected materials for the Goſpels, or ſet down his diſcourſes, whilſt he was with them.

(3.) Our Lord told his diſciples that they were not then diſpoſed to receive and underſtand ſome truths which the holy Ghoſt ſhould afterwards reveal to them; and the Apoſtles have taught us ſome things which are not to be found in the Goſpels, or are not clearly delivered there, as, the deſign and the aboliſhment of the Ceremonial law, certain relative duties, and ſome particulars concerning the worſhip of God and the regulation of Chriſtian ſocieties or Churches.

It is therefore a vain diſtinction which ſome have attempted to make between the precepts or doctrines of Chriſt and thoſe of the Apoſtles, as if leſs regard were to be paid to the latter than to the former. Our Saviour ſeems plainly to equal the Apoſtles to himſelf, as teachers, commands all men

* When Chriſt, after his reſurrection, ſent forth his Apoſtles, he gave them no command to write.

to receive them, to hear them, and to pay the ſame deference to them as to him.

(4.) Laſtly, the Apoſtles * upon ſeveral occaſions affirm that they had an extraordinary guidance of the holy Spirit; they declare that they had received their doctrines, not from men, but from Jeſus Chriſt, and that every one who pretended to inſpiration muſt acknowledge this, or ought to paſs for an impoſtor, if he owned it not. They ſay that they had the mind of Chriſt; they call their doctrine the word of God and of Chriſt, the commandment of God and of the Lord, the wiſdom of God, the wiſdom which God had revealed to them by his Spirit, and words which the holy Ghoſt had taught them, the teſtimony of God, the Goſpel of God by which men ſhould be judged: they aſſert that they are of God, that he who knoweth God heareth them, and that he who heareth them not is not of God.

VII. It cannot be denied that the Scriptures are often obſcure and diffi-

* *Rom.* ii. 16. Cor. I. ii. 7. 10. 12, 13. xiv. 37. *Epheſ.* iii. 3. 5. *Theſſ.* I. ii. 13. iv. 15. *Joh.* I. iv. 6. &c. See *Whitby* Gen. Pref. Vol. I.

cult,

cult, as for example, where the ſubject is propheſy or controverſy, where words and phraſes are uſed which are not to be found in other authors, and are now become of uncertain ſignification, and where doctrines are revealed not fully, but in part. Beſides the obſcurity ariſing from the ſubject and the ſtyle, the Scriptures have other difficulties common to all books which are very ancient and written in dead languages.

But many parts of the Scriptures are clear, and particularly thoſe which relate to * morality, to practical religion.

When we ſay that the Scriptures are clear in many places, the meaning is that they will be clear to thoſe who take the proper methods to underſtand them, and ſeek inſtruction, and pray to God for direction and aſſiſtance, and are deſirous to obey and pleaſe him.

Perſons of diſpoſitions equally good, will underſtand more or leſs of the Scriptures ac-

* In iis quæ unicuique neceſſaria ſunt creditu, ſperatu, factu, valdè eſt perſpicua Scriptura. In cæteris quantâ opus ſit cognitione linguarum, collatione verſionum, quanto labore, experti ſunt veteres, et nunc experiuntur qui in eo deſudant. *Grotius* Annot. ad Conſult. Caſſand.

cording

cording to their ſeveral capacities and * opportunities; and that degree of knowledge, which in the poor and illiterate were highly commendable, would be groſs and vitious ignorance in thoſe of higher rank, of more leiſure, learning, and abilities.

The ignorance of ſome people in matters of religion is aſtoniſhing, and the only plauſible excuſe for it, namely want of capacity or want of † leiſure, is often ſhamefully groundleſs: for the knowledge required of every perſon cannot be greater than his abilities, and the ‡ abilities of many perſons are greater than they think. The underſtanding muſt be exerciſed before its ſtrength

* They who ſay that human learning is of no uſe in religion, are no more to be diſputed with than the honeſt man in *Horace*,

Qui ſe credebat miros audire tragœdos,
In vacuo lætus ſeſſor plauſorque theatro.

Sola Scripturarum ars eſt, *ſays Jerome*, quam ſibi omnes paſſim vendicant; hanc garrula anus, hanc delirus ſenex, hanc ſophiſta verboſus, hanc univerſi præſumunt, lacerant, docent antequam diſcant.

† Virorum nugæ, negotia vocantur. *Auguſtin* Confeſs. I. 9.

‡ See Locke *Conduct of the Underſt.* § 4.

can

can be known, and by exercise it may be improved beyond imagination; and as to leisure, * there are few even of those who are engaged in a laborious way of life, who have not many hours which are a burden to them, or are consumed in a manner that hurts their souls and their bodies.

Common people are not to be encouraged to spend that time in religious exercises which is due to the care of their families, nor to make piety a cloke for laziness, nor to be contentious about things which they understand not; but if they would bestow a seventh part of their time and of their industry in the improvement of their hearts and minds and in religious meditations, they would find their advantage in it many ways; they would probably avoid several sins which ruin them even in this world, they would be more honest, more sober, more civil, and more industrious, and conse-

* Much business is no excuse for neglecting him in whom we live and move and have our being. Every Christian should be able to apply to himself in a religious sense the words of *Julius Cæsar* in *Lucan*:

—— media inter prælia semper
Stellarum cælique plagis, superisque vacavi.

quently

quently meet with more encouragement and kindneſs from their ſuperiors, they would find more divine aſſiſtance, more comfort, more peace of mind, and reſignation in all circumſtances, and they would not be, what ſeveral of them now are, guilty of ſo many faults, and expoſed to ſo many evils, that it is hard to ſay whether they are more wicked or more miſerable.

VII.

VII.

The Goſpel conſidered as it is grace and truth.

ST. *John* tells us that grace and truth came by Jeſus Chriſt, that he brought them into the world, and that they are contained in the revelation of God's will of which he was the author.

I. The Goſpel is frequently called grace; and this word has ſeveral meanings, all of which may be applied to the Goſpel.

1. The word *grace*, in its moſt obvious acceptation, means, favour, favour flowing from mercy and beneficence, to which the perſon who receives it can make no claim, as of right. In this ſenſe the Goſpel is moſt particularly and emphatically grace in all and every part of it, it is a gift of God which we could not in any manner be ſaid to deſerve.

2. The

2. The Goſpel is grace as it promiſes to * repenting ſinners not only an exemption from puniſhment, but a reſurrection to eternal happineſs; and our Saviour ſhewed ſo much tenderneſs and lenity, and gave ſo much encouragement to all in whom he diſcovered diſpoſitions towards amendment, that he drew upon himſelf from the cenſorious *Jews* the opprobrious name of the friend of ſinners and of † Publicans, a name which he was very willing to accept, declaring that he came into the world for the ſake of ſuch perſons, and that

* It was an unreaſonable objection made to Chriſtianity by *Julian* in his *Cæſars*, and by *Celſus* in *Orig.* III. p. 147. that by offering pardon to repenting ſinners it favoured immorality, and ſet open the kingdom of heaven to vice and folly. *Zoſimus* II. p. 61. inſinuates the ſame thing, and ſays that *Conſtantine* had recourſe to Chriſtianity after the *Pagan* prieſts had told him that their religion afforded no purgation for ſuch heinous crimes as he had committed. See *Phileleuth. Lipſienſ.* P. II. p. 20.

† Πάντες τελῶναι πάντες εἰσὶν ἅρπαγες.
Quot publicani, tot raptores.

The Emperor *Veſpaſian*'s father was a remarkable exception to this proverb, who was at the ſame time a Publican and a man of honour, and of whom *Suetonius* relates,—— *publicam quadrageſimæ in Aſiâ egit. Manebantque imagines a civitatibus ei poſitæ cum hoc titulo,* Καλῶς τελωνήσαντι. *Veſpas.* cap. I.

the

the buſineſs of his life was to ſeek and ſave them.

Repentance is indeed a duty of natural religion, and reaſon gives us hopes that it may be advantageous to us.

For as it is certain that ſin is evil and deteſtable, and diſpleaſing to God, it is no leſs evident that to confeſs and diſlike and condemn our faults, to avoid them for the future, to amend whatſoever is blameable in our conduct, to practiſe the duties which we have neglected, are actions good in themſelves and acceptable to God, and therefore cannot be unprofitable to us.

Beſides, we find our ſelves * able to change, as from better to worſe, ſo from worſe to better. Now certainly it is not to no

* This freedom neither excludes the Divine aſſiſtance, nor renders it unneceſſary: Man unqueſtionably receives all his powers from his Maker, and continually ſtands in need of his aid, for the performance of his duty.

If we can neither think nor act otherwiſe than we do, or rather, if we cannot act, in a true ſenſe, but are actuated by ſomething external, we muſt be juſt what we are, and power and choice belong not to us. Let us be concerned about nothing, if our concern ſignifies nothing; ſo adviſes the Poët and Fataliſt;

Solvite,

no purpoſe that we enjoy this power. It ſeems therefore probable that God, who has made us beings capable of amendment, will ſhew ſome favour to us if for the time to come we carefully endeavour to deſerve it.

To this may be added the conſideration of the great goodneſs of God. We account it commendable in men to forgive offences when the offender owns his fault, and offers ſuch reparation as he is able to make, and changes his behaviour. But God muſt ſurpaſs us in goodneſs no leſs than in all other perfections.

Solvite, mortales, animos, curaſque levate,
Totque ſupervacuis vitam deplete querelis.
Fata regunt orbem, certâ ſtant omnia lege.

Manilius IV. 13.

But the advice ſeems to come with an ill grace from a Fataliſt, and men might return the Poët this anſwer upon his own principles;

Deſine nos monitis, Vates, illudere vanis;
Hoc quoque fatale eſt, triſtes effundere queſtus
Incaſsùm, et curis nil proficientibus angi.

Homo, as *Grotius* well obſerves, ſolus ad imaginem Dei conditus dicitur, hoc eſt, mente libereque arbitrio præditus, quod fundamentum eſt dominationis ipſius in cæteras creaturas. Non poteſt enim rerum aliarum eſſe dominus, qui ſuarum actionum dominus non ſit. *De Satisfact.*

The

The ſame favourable concluſions may alſo be drawn from the weakneſs of human nature, which though it be no excuſe for ſtubborn diſobedience, yet ſeems to render the penitent proper objects of Divine mercy. If man were not a creature expoſed to many violent temptations, frail, and eaſily ſeduced, certainly ſome would be found of unſpotted innocence and integrity. But it is evident that the very beſt offend in many things. We muſt therefore conclude, either that God requires unſinning obedience, and will ſpare none of the race of mankind, which cannot be ſuppoſed, or that he will not be extreme to mark what is done amiſs.

Laſtly, the end and deſign of puniſhment is to be conſidered. To puniſh for revenge, and only that the offender may become miſerable, is a conduct unworthy of a good and wiſe being. Puniſhment ſhould be inflicted either for the profit and amendment of the offender, or for the good of the whole, or for both. But if God ſhould puniſh repenting ſinners very rigorouſly, and never pardon them, nothing uſeful could ariſe from their ſufferings; not their own amendment, nor the improvement of their fellow-

creatures, who could only be terrified and driven to deſpair by ſuch examples.

Theſe ſeem to be the ſuggeſtions of human reaſon left to itſelf, concerning the profitableneſs of repentance and reformation. But the utmoſt that a man can conclude without the aſſiſtance of revelation, is, that it ſhall be much better for him in a future ſtate, if he amends his life, than if he continues wicked. Thus far reaſon goes, and no farther.

But though repentance be, as we have obſerved, a part of natural religion, yet it ſeems to have been little practiſed by many of the *Gentiles*. * Amendment of life is a comely and commendable thing, and the *Pagans*

* *Referamur illuc, unde non decuit prius*
Abire: vel nunc caſta repetatur fides.
Nam ſera nunquam eſt ad bonos mores via.
Quem pœnitet peccaſſe, pœne eſt innocens.
Seneca *Agamem.*

Λόγ. — ὀρθῶς γίγνοιτο ἡμῖν, προαγορεύων ἐξίεσθαι πᾶσι τοῖς ἀσέβεσι τρόπων τῶν αὐτῶν εἰς τὸ εὐσεβῆς. — *Sermo — rectè ſequitur, qui impiis omnibus prædicet, ut a ſuis moribus ad pietatem ſeſe convertant.* Plato, *de Leg.* X.

When a man has taken ill courſes, ſays *Cebes*, he becomes miſerable for the remaining part of his life, unleſs *Repentance* interpoſes, by whoſe friendly aſſiſtance he is ſaved, and made happy. τὸν λοιπὸν βίον κατασχέσει ἐν πάσῃ κακοδαιμονίᾳ

Pagans certainly approved it; but that part of repentance which is a religious ſorrow, an acknowledgment of paſt offences to God our maker and governor, and prayers to him to forgive them, the Gentiles ſeem in a great meaſure to have overlooked, both in the courſe of their life, and at the * cloſe of it.

The

δαιμονίᾳ, ἂν μὴ Μετάνοια αὐτῷ ἀπὸ τῆς τύχης συναντήσῃ, — εἶτα — ἐξαίρει αὐτὸν ἐκ τῶν κακῶν, — [καὶ] σώζεται, καὶ μακάριος καὶ εὐδαίμων γίγνεται — *Tabul. Cebet.*

That ſome *Pagans* had and have ſome notions of the efficacy of repentance ſee in *Huet*, Alnet. Quæſt. II. 20. p. 275. III. 14. 369, 370.

* *The* [Chriſtian] *doctrine of repentance Nature never taught in her ſchool, neither was it ever found in the Books of the learned*, &c. John Hales *Serm. on St. Peter's fall.*

The lady in the iſland *Cea*, of whom *Val. Maximus* tells a remarkable ſtory, recommended her ſelf before ſhe drank poiſon to the favour of *Mercury*; but we find not that ſhe made any acknowledgment of ſins, or asked forgiveneſs of the Gods: *Tum defuſis Mercurio delibamentis, et invocato numine ejus, ut ſe placido itinere in meliorem ſedis infernæ deduceret partem, cupido hauſtu mortiferam traxit potionem.* II. VI. 8.

That this recommendatory prayer to Mercury was not uncommon, we may conjecture from *Sophocles*, who makes *Ajax* ſay, before he falls on his Sword, 838.

——— καλῶ δ' ἅμα
Πομπαῖον Ἑρμῆν χθόνιον εὖ με κοιμίσαι,
Ξὺν ἀσφαδάστῳ καὶ ταχεῖ πηδήματι,
Πλευρὰν διαῤῥήξαντα τοῖδε φασγάνῳ.

 In

The Law of *Moſes* appointed expiations and ſacrifices for ſome offences; and for ſome offences it appointed none.

The

In his *Oedipus Colon.* 1552. the Chorus prays to the infernal Gods, that they would grant that unhappy prince an eaſy death and a quiet paſſage to their dominions:

Εἰ θέμις ἐσί μοι λὰν ἀφανῆ θεὸν
Καὶ σὲ λιſαῖς σεβίζειν
Ἐννυχίων ἄναξ, &c.

Socrates, holding the cup in his hand, ſaid——*this however is lawful and right, to pray to the Gods that my departing from this ſtate to another, may be happy. So I pray, and ſo be it.* —— ἀλλ' ἔυχεσθαι γέ πᾳ ſοῖς θεοῖς ἔξεσί ſε καὶ χρῆ, ſὴν μεſοίκησιν ſὴν ἐνθένδε ἐκεῖσε ἐυſυχῆ γενέσθαι· ἃ δὴ καὶ ἐγὼ ἔυχομαί ſε, καὶ γένοιſο ſαύτη. *Plato.* Phæd. 66.

Theſe prayers were call'd ἐξιλήριοι ἐυχαὶ, as *Mr. Forſter* has obſerved in his note on this paſſage.

Peregrinus, εἶπεν, Δαίμονες μήτρῷοι καὶ πατρῷοι, δέξασθέ μὲ ἐυμενεῖς. ſαῦτα εἰπὼν ἐπήδησεν εἰς ſὸ πῦρ. *dixit; O materni atque paterni Dæmones, ſuſcipite me propitii. Quibus dictis in ignem inſiliit.* Lucian, *de Mort. Per.*

From a ſurvey of the devotions of the *Gentiles* it will appear that, ſome inſtances excepted, there was nothing ſpiritual in their prayers, no thankſgiving, no requeſt for divine aſſiſtance in the performance of their duty, no pious ſorrow and acknowledgment of their offences.

After the propagation of the Chriſtian religion, we find forms of adoration in ſome *Pagan* Writers, which are more rational and ſpiritual than the old Hymns and prayers of their anceſtors; and we may reaſonably ſuppoſe that theſe improvements aroſe from the Goſpel. See *Procl.* Hymn. ad

Solem,

The Prophets exhorted ſinners in general to return to God, and declared, that a broken and contrite heart God would not reject and deſpiſe, even where no ſacrifices had been appointed, or would be accepted by him. But that repentance ſhall open a way for us to eternal life, is clearly taught only in the Goſpel.

Solem, et ad Muſas; *Jamblich.* de Myſt. Ægypt. §. 5. c. 26; *Simplic.* in *Epictet. ad fin.* to whom I wiſh I could add *Maximus Tyrius.* It is pity that he, who on other accounts deſerves commendation, ſhould have taught that prayer to God was ſuperfluous, *Diſc.* 30. See alſo *Juvenal,* x. 346. and the Commentators.

Seneca ſays, *Primus eſt deorum cultus, deos credere: deinde reddere illis majeſtatem ſuam, reddere bonitatem.* —— *Vis deos propitiare? bonus eſto. Satis illos coluit quiſquis imitatus eſt.* Epiſt. 95. p. 470. But that he did not think prayer to be uſeleſs and unneceſſary, as ſome may fancy from theſe words, will appear from the following places. *Nos quoque exiſtimamus vota proficere, ſalvâ vi et poteſtate fatorum. Quædam enim a Diis immortalibus ita ſuſpenſa relicta ſunt, ut in bonum vertant, ſi admotæ Diis preces fuerint, ſi vota ſuſcepta.* Nat. Quæſt. II. 57. *Itaque non dat Deus beneficia, — non exaudit precantium voces et undique ſublatis in cælum manibus vota facientium privata ac publica. Quod profecto non fieret, nec in hunc furorem omnes mortales conſenſiſſent alloquendi ſurda numina et inefficaces Deos, niſi noſſent illorum beneficia nunc ultro oblata, nunc orantibus data.* De Benef. IV. 4.

3. The Goſpel is grace, as it promiſes us, if we humbly and ſincerely deſire it, the Divine aſſiſtance, which ſhall comfort us in afflictions, and ſupport us under temptations, and enable us to work out our ſalvation, and to paſs ſafely through this ſtate of trial to a ſtate of happineſs.

4. The Goſpel may be called grace with reſpect to the manner in which it was revealed. The Law, which was a ſeverer inſtitution, was delivered with an awful pomp and majeſty, that might ſtrike a terror into the people, and work powerfully upon their fears, and extort obedience from them by the dread of puniſhment. But the Goſpel, the covenant of peace, made its appearance with mildneſs and condeſcenſion. It was introduced by the Son of God converſing familiarly with men, teaching them by his doctrine and example, willing with great patience to bear with their imperfections and weakneſſes, and to guide them gently to virtue and knowledge by plain and repeated inſtructions.

5. The Goſpel is grace, as it contains righteous and equitable laws. The duties towards God, which it requires of us, are a rea-

a reaſonable ſervice which we are bound in gratitude to perform. Our duty to our neighbour, as it is there laid down, promotes the happineſs of mankind, renders us uſeful in every ſtation, raiſes us up friends, and makes us paſs our days with tranquillity and reputation. The duty which it teaches us to our ſelves tends to moderate our unruly paſſions and ſubdue thoſe worſt enemies to our repoſe, to preſerve our mind quiet, and our underſtanding clear, and capable of exerting its natural powers. Theſe duties it ſo enjoins and explains, that if any Chriſtian be ignorant of them, it muſt be by his own wilful and great negligence. To theſe it adds baptiſm and the ſupper of the Lord, of which the firſt is performed once, and never afterwards repeated, and the ſecond, as to the frequency of receiving it, is ſo far left to our own diſcretion, that it can never interfere with any moral duty, or hinder us from performing any thing that is truly profitable and commendable. Whatſoever was burdenſome in the Law of *Moſes* was taken away by the Goſpel, which is called the law of liberty, as it removed that yoke from

the *Jews*, and impoſed it not upon the *Gentiles*. The ceremonial ordinances are aboliſhed, and in their ſtead a plain and ſpiritual worſhip of God takes place,

6. The Goſpel is grace, as it is a gift offered to all, an invitation from which none are excluded. It does not, like the Law of *Moſes*, diſtinguiſh one nation from another; it is a religion confined in none of its rites to particular places and people, but fitted for univerſal uſe.

It is true indeed, that many nations have been and are ignorant of it, and that it has not been publiſhed to the whole world. God has not thought proper to acquaint us with the reaſons why he permits this*, but we may be certain that, though we cannot ſearch out all the ways of God, yet perfect wiſdom does nothing unfit, and perfect goodneſs nothing unmerciful. We know, and this knowledge is ſufficient, that God is repreſented in Scripture, as the common Father of Mankind, who is good to all his creatures, and incapable of pre-

* Chriſtianity is to be accounted as a favour; and for favours it is not neceſſary to aſſign any reaſon, beſides the will of the ſupreme Donour.

judice

judice and partiality, and not willing that any ſhould periſh; that every one ſhall be accepted according to what he hath, and not according to what he hath not; that to every one is given a light to guide him, and a law, either written or unwritten, either revelation or reaſon, by which he ſhall be judged.

7. Grace in ſome places of the New Teſtament means thoſe extraordinary powers which the holy Ghoſt conferred upon the Apoſtles and firſt believers, by which they were enabled to convert *Jews* and *Gentiles*, and to inſtruct Chriſtians, and to give a ſufficient teſtimony to the truth of the Goſpel.

8. Laſtly, Grace ſometimes means goodneſs or moral virtue. In this ſenſe the Goſpel is grace, as it ſets morality in a clear light, and enforces the practice of it by the beſt and moſt effectual motives; as it produced, when it was firſt preached a wonderful and happy change in the behaviour of thoſe who received it, and as it continues ſtill to make Chriſtians, if not ſo good as they ought to be, yet far better than they would have been without it.

It

It will look like diſſimulation and inſincerity to paſs by an argument ſo often urged againſt the Goſpel, as it is grace, namely the doctrine of future puniſhments contained in it.

At this ſad thought, ſay they, all theſe fair and pleaſing ideas of heavenly grace and overflowing benevolence ſeem to droop and fade away, and the ſoul, rather than to be expoſed to the bare poſſibility of undergoing ſuch evils, would willingly † take refuge in a ſilent everlaſting inſenſibility, would have choſen not to have been at all, if ſuch a choice could be ſuppoſed poſſible, rather than to have been called forth into being on ſuch dangerous terms.

That GOD IS GOOD, ſeems to be a ſufficient anſwer. At preſent, objections muſt be impertinent, and ſolutions imperfect. Let us wait till the righteous Judge appears, and then theſe and many other difficulties will be removed. In the mean time we may reſt ſatisfied with this, that ſin

† Did I requeſt thee, Maker, from my clay
To mould me man, did I ſollicit thee
From darkneſs to promote me?— &c.
—— Him after all diſputes
Forc'd I abſolve.
Milton Par. Loſt. X.

ſhall

ſhall neither enjoy an impunity irreconcileable with God's juſtice and majeſty, nor endure ſufferings inconſiſtent with his mercy and clemency.

It is, I think, generally ſuppoſed, that there will be a great variety of puniſhments. To be deprived of ſome good which by a proper conduct might have been ſecured and obtained, if it be attended with diſſatisfaction or regret, is certainly a puniſhment; and if it always laſts, an eternal puniſhment. He who is in this condition, has loſt his rank, and is placed far beneath many of thoſe who were once his equals, without a * poſſibility of retrieving the loſs.

No leſs various may be the recompenſes. The inexhauſtible Fountain of good has *more than one bleſſing*. He has gifts of a lower ſort for thoſe who are not worthy *to ſit down on the right* or *on the left hand* of his Son. *In his houſe are many* † *manſions*,

* ——— fruſtra ſectabere canthum,
Cum rota poſterior curras, et in axe ſecundo.
Perſius, V. 71.

† Multa in theſauris Patris eſt habitatio, Chriſte,
Diſparibus diſcreta locis, non poſco beatâ
In regione domum, &c.
Prudentius Hamartig. 952.

in

in his wide-extended kingdom there may be habitations, remote perhaps from his throne, yet not beyond his favourable influences, ſituated within the realms of light, and appointed for beings of moderate improvements, but of good inclinations, who ſhall be permitted to adore him at a § diſtance.

II. We have conſidered the Goſpel as it is grace; let us now, ſecondly take a view of it as it is truth.

The Goſpel is frequently called the truth.

I. It is ſo called in oppoſition to the * falſehood of *Paganiſm*, which had overſpread the world. The ignorance of the *Pagans* and the errors into which their vices had led them are repreſented in the New Teſtament by the ſtrongeſt expreſſions. It is there ſaid that they knew not God, that they did not like to retain him in their knowledge, and that they were without God in the world. The meaning of which ſeems not to be that the *Gentiles* were all

§ ——————— with whom would I
Gladly behold though but his utmoſt skirts
Of glory, and far off his ſteps adore.

* Falſe Gods are called *lies* in Scripture. *Grotius* on *Rom.* I. 25.

atheiſts,

atheiſts, and abſolutely and wholly ignorant of God, but that they glorified him not as God; for as in the language of the Scriptures, to know God is to obey him; ſo not to know him, is not to honour him, and all wicked men are called unbelievers and men who know not God. The *Gentiles* had not indeed quite loſt all notions of the excellence and perfections of the Divine nature; they generally acknowledged one ſupreme God, and ſome thought him to be as good and as wiſe as he was powerful; but * with him they adored inferior § Deities. To theſe many *Gentiles* aſcribed

* Some philoſophers, at laſt, in their refinements upon religion, repreſented the ſupreme God as above all adoration, and not to be worſhipped, like inferior deities, by prayers and praiſes, but only by a ſilent ſort of contemplation. *Conſtat ex* L. 4. *Cyrilli contra Julianum, Porphyrium exiſtimaſſe ſolos deos mundanos colendos eſſe, non autem Supremum illum, Fuit et hæc plurimorum ex ſcholâ Platonicâ opinio.* Gale ad *Jamblich.* More to the ſome purpoſe may be ſeen in *Fabricius* de Ver. Rel. Chriſt. c. 8. p. 315.

§ Thoſe *Pagans*, who were not atheiſts or ſceptics, ſeem generally to have been polytheiſts, that is, to have acknowledged one ſupreme and many inferior Gods.

The ancient *Chineſe* are to be excepted, if we may give credit to *Louis Le Comte*, who in his relation of *China* ſays, that for the ſpace of near two thouſand years they preſerved the knowledge of the true God, and that they were not corrupted

aſcribed much weakneſs and wickedneſs, and

corrupted with idolatry till eight hundred years before Chriſt. Other Writers there are, who ſay that the old religion of *China* was indeed free from groſs idolatry, from the worſhip of images and of dead men; but that it appointed the worſhip of Dæmons, or inferior deities, who were to be adored beſides the ſupreme God. See *Fabric.* Luc. Evang. cap. 39. and *Bayle* Dict. ZOROASTRE, p. 2930. not.

Concerning the ancient *Perſians*, ſee *Hyde*, Rel. Vet. Perſ. and *Fabricius*, Bibliogr. Antiq. p. 30, 31, and *Cudworth*.

The *Arabians* before *Mohammed* are ſaid to have acknowledged only one God; but beſides him they worſhipped inferior deities, Angels, Saints, *&c.* as mediators and interceſſors. See *Prideaux* Life of Mahom. and *Sale's* Coran. *Prelim. Diſc.* p. 14. &c.

Cudworth obſerves, that *from the words of* Onatus *the* Pythagorean *in* Stobæus, *it plainly appears that in his time there were ſome who acknowledged one only God, denying all thoſe other Gods then commonly worſhipped. And indeed* Anaxagoras *ſeems to have been ſuch a one* —— *and ſome ſuch there were alſo amongſt the ancient* Ægyptians. —— *Moreover* Proclus *upon* Plato's Timæus *tells us, that there has been always leſs doubt and controverſy in the world concerning the one God, than concerning the many Gods.* Intell. Syſt. p. 233.

Anaxagoras held matter to be ſelf-exiſtent; and *Gerard Voſſius* was miſtaken in thinking that this philoſopher believed the world to have been created, becauſe Νοῦν *eſſe dixit principium mundi.* Theſ. Theol. Diſp. 1. p. 5. Νοῦς, according to *Anaxagoras*, was only ἀρχὴ κινήσεως, the firſt mover, the cauſe of motion, and the former of all things.

Lucian deſcribing and deriding the various opinions of the philoſophers concerning the Gods and the world, ſpeaks of ſome perſons who maintained the unity of God. His words are remarkable: ἢ οἱ μὲν τοὺς ἄλλους ἅπαντας θεοὺς ἀπελόσαν-

τες,

and worſhipped them in a way not * unſuitable to their ſuppoſed nature. They

ῆες, ἑνὶ μόνῳ τὴν τῶν ὅλων ἀρχὴν ἀπένεμον· ὥστε ῥῆμα καὶ ἄχθεσθαί μες, τοσαύτην ἀποεῖαν θεῶν ἀκούοντα. οἱ δ' ἔμπαλιν ἐπιδαψιλευόμενοι, πολλάς τε αὐτὰς ἀπέφαινον, καὶ διελόμενοι, τὸν μέν τινα πρῶτον θεὸν ἐπεκάλεν, τοῖς δὲ τὰ δεύτερα, καὶ τρίτα ἔνεμον τῆς θεότητος. *Icaromen.*

Now if we conſider how hard it is to produce *Pagan* philoſophers, who taught the unity of God in ſo very expreſs a manner as is here repreſented by *Lucian*, we ſhall be inclined to think, that he had other perſons in view. Some ſays he, make a ſad ſcarcity of Gods, expelling them all but one, and giving him the whole power and management; others are more bountiful, and divide the divinity into a firſt, a ſecond, and a third God. I think the words will bear this ſenſe; and, if ſo, *Lucian* might perhaps intend to ſcoff at the *Jews* and the *Chriſtians*.

The more refined kind of polytheiſm ſeems to have been the doctrine of one God and Father of all, who governed the world and adminiſtred human affairs by the interpoſition and offices of beings inferior to himſelf and ſuperior to us, in a looſer ſenſe call'd Gods, who were of a middle nature between God and men, who preſided over this lower world, and who, as mediators, conveyed bleſſings from God to us, and offer'd up our adorations and thankſgivings to him. Notions like theſe had been adopted by ſome *Jews*, and by ſome of the firſt *Gentile* converts to Chriſtianity. St. *Paul* therefore exhorts the *Coloſſians* to place their faith and truſt, not in Angels, but in Chriſt, as in him by whom alone we have acceſs to the Father, 11. 18. where ſee the Commentators, and *Whitby*, p. 466. Vol. II. and on *Hebr.* 1. 10.

* See *Juſtin M.* Apol. II. p. 128. and Dr. *Thirlby*'s notes, and *Grotius* de Satisfact. c. 10.

worſhipped

worſhipped God in his works, in all things, and deified the ſeveral parts of nature, they worſhipped him under emblems, ſymbols, ſenſible repreſentations and images. They deified dead, and ſometimes living perſons, the former often out of injudicious gratitude, the latter uſually out of ſordid flattery. Amongſt the lower ſort ſuperſtition prevailed, amongſt the better, uncertainty * and doubt. And thus not making a proper uſe of their reaſon, they were ignorant, or not ſufficiently perſuaded of thoſe religious truths upon the knowledge and aſſurance of which our happineſs even in this life in a great meaſure depends; for if we take away the firm belief of a merciful creator and preſerver of the world, whoſe providence extends it ſelf over all, and whoſe goodneſs protects and will reward thoſe who ſerve him and truſt in him; a man can enjoy no rational peace of mind, no true and well-grounded and laſting ſatisfaction. He cannot ſupport himſelf in

* Ibant obſcuri ſola ſub nocte per umbram.
Quale per incertam lunam ſub luce maligna
Eſt iter in ſilvis; ubi cælum condidit umbra
Jupiter, et rebus nox abſtulit atra colorem.
Virgil.

the

the troubles inſeparable from life. Scarce can he rejoice even in the days of proſperity, which, he knows, muſt be of no long continuance.

If it were true that there is no God, and we could be certain of it, it would be a truth which a rational being could not forbear to mourn all the days of his life. Man would then be expoſed, friendleſs and fatherleſs, to every kind of evil, under the dominion of blind Chance or unrelenting Neceſſity; nor could he be ſure that death would put an end to him and to his ſufferings, and that he ſhould not be drawn by a fatal Chain of things from this bad ſtate to a worſe. But all that we ſee without us, and all that paſſes within us, tells us in the ſilent language of nature, that there is an Author and Governor of the univerſe.

The Goſpel gives us a juſt and amiable deſcription of him. It teaches us that there is a God in whom we may confide, and whom, if we love virtue, we ſhall certainly love, to whom we may * addreſs

 our

* The duty of man is threefold; to God, to his fellow-creatures, to himſelf. The *Gentiles* had juſter notions of the

our ſelves for the relief of our wants, and the pardon of our offences. It teaches us that God is not ſuch a Being as ſome of the *Gentiles* eſteemed him to be, not a being offended eaſily and without cauſe, and pacified by frivolous ceremonies, not a being enſlaved to neceſſity and fate, not a being who takes no notice of the world, and cares not whether men be virtuous or wicked, nor one who regards only great things, and cannot or will not inſpect all; but ſuch a being in every reſpect as a good man would wiſh him to be, and infinitely more perfect than the wiſeſt man can conceive him to be.

The Goſpel teaches us to be ſenſible of our wants and imperfections, and dependence upon God, and thereby * greatly ſurpaſſes

the duty of man to mankind and to himſelf, than they had concerning his duty to God. *Cicero*, I think, paſſes over this important part of morality in his *Books of Offices*, only juſt touching upon it, II. 3. *deos placatos pietas efficiet et ſanctitas.*

* See the Commentators on *Horace*, *Epiſt.* I. xviii. 111.

Sed ſatis eſt orare Jovem, quæ ponit et auſert:
Det vitam, det opes: æquum mi animum ipſe parabo.

Better is the following obſervation of *Cicero*: *Multos—et noſtra civitas et Græcia tulit ſingulares viros; quorum neminem, niſi*

ſurpaſſes *Pagan* philoſophy in enforcing * humility.

niſi juvante Deo, talem fuiſſe credendum eſt.—Nemò igitur vir magnus ſine aliquo afflatu divino unquam fuit. De Nat. Deor. II. 66. And of *Maximus Tyrius*, who ſuppoſes that virtuous minds have ξυναγωνισὴν θεὸν καὶ συλλήπτορα, *Diſſ.* xxii. and of *Seneca*, who ſays, *Bonus vir ſine Deo nemo eſt. An poteſt aliquis ſupra fortunam, niſi ab illo adjutus, exſurgere? ille dat conſilia magnifica et erecta. In unoquoque virorum bonorum, Quis Deus incertum eſt, habitat Deus.* Epiſt. XLI.

* The word *humilitas* is uſed by *Latin* writers in a bad ſenſe; but that this virtue was not quite unknown to them, and to other *Gentiles*, may be proved thus: They ackowledged that pride or ſelf-conceit was a vice; they muſt therefore have perceived that there was a virtue contrary to it, and that it conſiſted in thinking ſoberly of our ſelves, and as we ought to think, and in acting ſuitably to ſuch thoughts, and as they ſometimes uſe μέγα φρονεῖν, ὑψηλὰ φρονεῖν, in a bad ſenſe, they muſt have allowed it to be commendable μέτρια καὶ ἀνθρώποις ἴσα φρονεῖν. They had alſo a name for this virtue: the *Romans* called it *modeſtia, moderatio*. *Barrow* ſays in one of his Diſcourſes, that the word *candor* anſwers nearly to *humility*. If he had thought at that time of *modeſtia*, he would have preferr'd it to *candor*. The word *demiſſus* is alſo found in *Latin* authors to denote a good diſpoſition; it anſwers to ταπεινὸς, and it means *humble, modeſt, meek*. Plato *de Leg.* IV. p. 715, 6. recommends humility towards God: ὁ μὲν δὴ Θεὸς, ἀρχὴν καὶ τελευτὴν, καὶ μέσα τῶν ὄντων ἁπάντων ἔχων, εὐθεῖαν περαίνει κατὰ φύσιν περιπορευόμενος. τῷ δ' αὖ ξυνέπεσθαι δίκη τῶν ἀπολειπομένων τὸ θεῖον νόμιμα τιμωρός· ᾧ ὁ μὴ ἐυδαιμονήσειν μέλλων, ἑπόμενος, ξυνέπεσθαι ταπεινὸς [καὶ] κεκοσμημένος. ὁ δὲ μὴ ἐξαρθεὶς ὑπὸ μεγαλαυχίας ——— *Deus omnium rerum et principium et medium et finem*

The Goſpel has taught us more than we could elſe have diſcovered ‡ concerning our ſtate hereafter.

It is true that reaſon furniſhes us with very probable arguments for the ſouls immortality, and that many in all ages have

in ſe habens, rectam viam peragit, explicans vim ſuam atque potentiam per hanc univerſi naturam, perque omnes illius partes circumquaque permanans. Hunc ſequitur juſtitia, eorum qui a divinâ lege deficiunt ultrix atque vindex, cui quidem juſtitiæ is modeſto *et compoſito animo adhæret qui felix eſt futurus, ejuſque ductum et auſpicium conſtanter perſequitur. Qui autem ſuperbiâ elatus eſt* —— It is certain that ταπεινὸς has a good ſenſe here. See alſo *Origen* contr. *Celſ.* VI. p. 285. where this paſſage is quoted.

As they are in an error who ſay that humility was abſolutely unknown to the *Pagans*; ſo thoſe learned men ſeem no leſs miſtaken, who will needs have it that this virtue is very frequently mentioned by the philoſophers. When you expect proofs of their aſſertion, they give you paſſages which recommend patience under injuries and calamities, a contempt of honours and power, of glory and popular applauſe, of cenſure and reproach; and at the head of the humble and meek they place the ragged regiment of the *Cynics*, many of whom were not leſs proud than poor. See *Huet.* Aln. Quæſt. III. 8.

‡ See *Whitby* on *Tim.* II. I. 10. and *Le Clerc* Proleg. Hiſt. Eccl. Sect. I. and II. *Varro* commemorare Deos cœpit, — oſtendens in omnibus, quod ſit cujuſque munus, et propter quid cuique debeat ſupplicari. In quâ univerſâ diligentiâ, nullos demonſtravit vel denominavit Deos, a quibus vita æterna poſcenda ſit. *Auguſt.* de Civ. Dei. VI. 9.

believed

believed it; nevertheleſs it is true alſo that the Goſpel has given us a clearer knowledge of our future condition.

For, (1.) the beſt arguments which reaſon ſuggeſts for the immortality of the ſoul are founded upon right notions of God and of morality; but before the Goſpel was revealed, the common people amongſt the *Gentiles* had low and imperfect notions of theſe important truths, and conſequently they were not perſuaded upon good grounds of their future exiſtence.

(2.) Though the belief of a ſtate after this was much receiv'd amongſt men, yet was it entertained by the vulgar rather as an ancient and long-eſtabliſh'd opinion, than as a truth founded upon juſt reaſoning. Their anceſtors had believed a life to come, and they retained the notions which had been delivered down to them by tradition; but they could not trace this tradition up to its riſe, nor fix it upon an authority which might be truſted.

(3.) They who argued juſtly enough to conclude from the nature of God and of man, that it was reaſonable to believe the immortality of the ſoul, and to hope that

a future ſtate of happineſs ſhould be the reward of a well-ſpent life, yet could not hence fairly draw any concluſions to their own full ſatisfaction; for they muſt have been ſenſible that they had not lived up to the laws of nature and the dictates of their own reaſon, and that they had offended the author of their being in many inſtances. It is true, they might have recourſe to repentance and amendment, but how far this would avail they could not certainly know. What could they hope more than to be removed after death into ſome other world, ſome other ſtate perhaps not much better than this?

(4.) Many * who believed the immortality of ſouls, believed alſo a continual and ſucceſſive removal of ſouls from one body to another, and no fixed ſtate of permanent happineſs. After death they were to dwell in ſome other body, and to continue thus changing their abodes, as they ſuppoſed that they had already done in ages paſt. And as in this life they had no memory of their former condition, ſo the memory of their preſent ſtate was to be loſt

* See *Grotius* on *Epheſ.* xi. 12.

in

in the next. Thus their remembrance at * leaſt, which ſeems to be no ſmall part of one's ſelf, was to periſh by death.

(5.) Some, who in words acknowledged the immortality of he Soul, ſeem in reality to have taken it away, by imagining that the ſoul was a part of the Soul of the world, of the Deity, and that ‡ upon its ſeparation from the body it was reunited to it.

(6.) Some endeavoured to prove the ſouls immortality by arguments which proved too much, which ſhewed, if they ſhewed any thing, that the ſoul was from eternity; whence diſagreeable conſequences ſeem to flow.

(7.) Some ſuppoſed that the ſoul ſhould outlive the body, and receive a reward of virtue, but they thought that it was material and ſubject to diſſolution, and that a time muſt come when it ſhould periſh.

* That *conſciouſneſs* is requiſite in *perſonal identity*, was the opinion of Lucretius III. 859, and of Tertullian *De Reſurr. Carnis.* —— *Neque mentem, neque memoriam, neque conſcientiam hominis hodierni credibile eſt aboleri, &c.*——*Si non meminerim me eſſe qui merui, quomodo gloriam Deo dicam?* —— &c.

Juſtin Martyr, or the old man who inſtructs him, ſays much the ſame. *Dial.* p. 147.

‡ See *Virgil* Georg. IV. 221.

(8.) Many had ſo far debaſed their underſtanding as to perſuade themſelves that death was a diſſolution of the whole man, and that there was nothing to * hope or fear beyond this life.

Some we find entertaining † faint hopes mixed with || many doubts, others fancying

* ——— mortem *cuncta mortalium mala diſſolvere; ultra neque curæ, neque gaudio locum eſſe.* Cæſar *apud* Salluſt. B. C. 50. ubi vide *Waſſe.*

† Hence thoſe common forms of ſpeaking; *Si tamen e nobis aliquid reſtat; Si quid habet ſenſûs umbra;* &c.

|| *Seneca* on this ſubject is ἀλλοπρόσαλλος, wavering and inconſtant in his ſentiments. What *Homer* ſays of one of his heroes, might be applied to him:

Τυδείδην δ' οὐκ ἂν γνοίης, ποτέροισι μετείη,
Ἠὲ μετὰ Τρώεσσιν ὁμιλέοι, ἢ μετ' Ἀχαιοῖς.
Il. E. 85.

Juvabat de æternitate animarum quærere, imo mehercule credere. Credebam enim facilè opinionibus magnorum virorum, rem gratiſſimam promittentium magis quam probantium. Epiſt. CII. p. 503.

He ſays indeed, *Dies iſte, quem tanquam extremum reformidas, æterni natalis eſt.* Epiſt. CII. and elſewhere, *Animus æternitatis ſuæ memor, in omne, quod fuit, futurumque eſt, omnibus ſæculis vadit.* And, *Animus ſacer et æternus eſt.* Conſol. ad Helv. II. And, *Ipſe quidem æternus, melioriſque nunc ſtatus eſt,* &c. Ad Marc. 24.

But moſt of theſe paſſages are taken from his *Conſolations,* where it behoved him to ſpeak magnificently of the future ſtate of the ſoul, that he might aſſuage the grief of thoſe

ing that they ſhould be removed from one body to another, and be perpetual wanderers, others looking upon the grave § as upon their eternal habitation, and ſadly

thoſe whom he exhorted to bear patiently the death or the abſence of their deareſt friends. In other places he talks n another manner.

Beſides, the word *æternus* in *Seneca* often means *diuturnus*. Conſol. ad Marc. *Nos quoque felices animæ et æterna ſortitæ, cum Deo viſum erit iſta moliri, labentibus cunctis, et ipſi parva ruinæ ingentis acceſſio, in antiqua elementa vertemur*. Nat. Quæſt. VII. *Non exiſtimo Cometen ſubitaneum ignem, ſed inter æterna opera naturæ*. Nat. Quæſt. II. 10. he calls the ſtars *æternos ignes*. And again *Nat. Quæſt.* VII. 23. See alſo ch. 25 and 37. And in *Thyeſtes* 835.

Non æternæ facis exortu
Dux aſtrorum ſecula ducens
Dabit æſtatis brumæque notas.——
Ibit in unum congeſta ſinum
Turba Deorum.

Whence it appears, that *Seneca* calls *eternal* whatſoever he thought would laſt *uſque ad ἐκπύρωσιν*, till the Stoical conflagration, and would not periſh before the end of the world.

This is no very uncommon uſe of the word *æternus*, which has alſo the comparative *æternior*. See *Faber's Theſaurus*.

On the contrary, *longævus* ſometimes ſignifies *immortal*, as *Servius* thinks, on *Virgil* Æn. VI. 764. and the *Scholiaſt* interprets *μακρόαιων, ἀθάνατος* in *Sophocles* Antig. 999.

§ It is call'd DOMUS ÆTERNA in many Inſcriptions. *Gruter*, p. DCCLX. 5. DCCXC. 5. DCCCCIII. 6. DCCCCXIII. 6. &c.

com-

* complaining that the ſun and ſtars could ſet and riſe again, but that man when his day was ſet, muſt lie down in darkneſs and ſleep a perpetual ſleep.

2. The

* Soles occidere et redire poſſunt:
Nobis, quum ſemel occidit brevis lux,
Nox eſt perpetua una dormienda.
Catullus V.

Ἆι ἆι, ταὶ μαλάχαι μὲν ἐπὰν κατὰ κᾶπον ὄλωνται,
Ἢ τὰ χλωρὰ σέλινα, τό τ' ἐυθαλὲς ὗλον ἄνηθον,
Ὕστερον ἂυ ζώοντι, καὶ εἰς ἔτος ἄλλο φύοντι·
Ἄμμες δ' οἱ μεγάλοι καὶ καρτεροὶ ἢ σοφοὶ ἄνδρες,
Ὁππότε πρῶτα θάνωμες, ἀνακοοὶ ἐν χθονὶ κόιλᾳ
Εὔδομες εὖ μάλα μακρὸν ἀτέρμονα νήγρετον ὕπνον.
Moſchus Epitaph. Bion.

Alaſs! the tender herbs, and flow'ry tribes,
Though cruſh'd by Winter's unrelenting hand,
Revive and riſe when Vernal Zephyrs call.
But we, the brave, the mighty, and the wiſe,
Bloom, flouriſh, fade, and fall,—and then ſucceeds
A long long, ſilent, dark, oblivious ſleep;
A ſleep, which no propitious Pow'r diſpells,
Nor changing ſeaſons, nor revolving years,

In *Seneca's Troades*, the Chorus ſays, 271.

Verum eſt? an timidos fabula decipit
Umbras corporibus vivere conditis? &c.
Poſt mortem nihil eſt, ipſaque mors nihil, &c.

Where the Poet, to introduce this faſhionable *Epicurean* doctrine, makes his Chorus ſpeak inconſiſtently and out of character; inconſiſtently, as may be ſeen *vers.* 158.

Felix

2. The Goſpel is truth, as it is the accompliſhment of the propheſies of future favours made under the Law. Chriſt was the prince of peace, the light of the *Gentiles*, the deliverer of the captives, the preacher of glad tidings, the founder of an everlaſting kingdom in a more exalted ſenſe than was commonly imagined by the *Jews* before his coming.

3. Laſtly. In the Law was contained an image and repreſentation of good things to come: in the Goſpel thoſe good things are brought to light. The Goſpel then is truth in oppoſition to the *Jewiſh* diſpenſation, as it is the ſubſtance and reality of all thoſe things which are figured by the Law; or as they were mere ſhadows compared to that ſolid and ſubſtantial truth which Chriſt has diſcovered to us.

Felix Priamus, —— nunc Elyſii
Nemoris tutis errat in umbris, &c.

and out of character, becauſe in the heroic ages, in the time of the *Trojan* war, the exiſtence of the ſoul after death was generally believed, according to *Homer*.

F I N I S.

MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM

ERRATA.

PAGE 22. l. 4. *read* obligation. p. 25. note. l. 3. r. *he*. p. 51. note. l. 27. r. publiſhed. p. 52. note. l. 16. r. which is. p. 76. l. 11. r. led. p. 88. l. 14. r. ſince. p. 98. l. 7. r. bare, p. 99. note. l. 2. r. *at ut*. p. 105. note. l. 15. r. πρώτη. p. 138. note. laſt l. r. *Malchi*. p. 164. note. l. 14. r. thought it right. p. 196. note. l. 16. r. *du tout*. p. 203. note. laſt l. r. *quod*.

PAGE 53. Note. l. 21. *and we ſhall take a pleaſure to die at your command.* καὶ ἡμεῖς ἡδέως φέρομεν τὸ τοιοῦτο θανάτου τὸ γέρας. I have underſtood τοιούτου θανάτου to be, a death inflicted by the Emperor, after he had himſelf taken cogniſance of the cauſe. Some perhaps may think that it means, a death which a Chriſtian ſuffers, not for evil doing, but for conſcience ſake. It may be tranſlated, *and we chearfully bear ſuch a death, as an honour and a reward*, and the reader may put his own interpretation upon it.